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# 100 YEARS *of* PROGRESS

*A History of Viola and Vicinity*



*Published July 1955*



Panoramic View of Viola, Taken From Mt. Nebo

100 YEARS  
of  
PROGRESS

*A history of Viola and Vicinity, including townships of  
Forest in Richland County, and Kickapoo  
in Vernon County.*



*Compiled, Edited and Written By*

**MRS. FRED G. MATTHES**, <sup>mares</sup>  
Viola, Wisconsin

*Mrs Fred Matthes*

Allen County Public Library  
900 Webster Street  
PO Box 2270  
Fort Wayne, IN 46801-2270

#### FORWORD AND ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

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After spending the past year in the research and writing of this History, I have acquired a new sense of appreciation and loyalty for my home town. I hope that I have been able in a small way at least, in conveying this feeling to those who may chance to read this book. I realize there will be mistakes made in the recordings of the facts that were available, but I have tried to do the best I could in making a permanent record of the past one hundred years of our Community's history.

To some people of the present generation this history may not be of much interest. My original ambition in writing this story was perhaps a selfish one, thinking it might be of interest to my grandchildren in years to come, but as time went on, I realized it was not for my family alone, but for all who claimed a personal interest in the progress of our community. To this aim I worked, to give the best I knew how. Be patient with my errors. This was not written as a piece of literature but only with Historical Facts in mind.

I owe much thanks to many people who assisted me in the research that made possible the writing of this history. Had it not been for the foresight of people like Mrs. Cyrus Turner, Elias Cushman, Salma Rogers and W. J. Waggoner, who wrote articles on early pioneer life, there would be few records of the first forty years of our community.

I also owe a great debt of gratitude to the Publishers of our local papers, for their thorough recordings of events that made possible, accurate accounts of the past sixty years. No one can over estimate the value of our weekly newspaper and the part it plays in the progress of our community. Not just alone in recording of events, but the occasional injections of a few words of praise and optimism builds up the morale of the town and it takes on a new spurt of progress.

I wish also to acknowledge the great help that Mrs. Hattie Loveless gave me by the research and time she spent in writing articles that I have used about our library, parks and local American Legion.

And to Roy Austin and my parents, Mr. and Mrs. Elmer Van Fleet, I owe thanks for many stories of pioneer life that were familiar events in their early years or told to them by their parents.

Last, but not least, I give great credit to my husband for his encouragement during the times when I became discouraged and for his help and suggestions. Also to my daughter, Hilda, for the hours she took from her own work to type all the material for this book.

It was through the combined efforts of many people that this book has been made possible, and to anyone who has helped, although their names are not mentioned, I wish to express my appreciation.

MAE MATTHES

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When Heaven's creative hand was laid,  
Upon those gorgeous hills  
In emerald sheen and gold arrayed,  
And cleft by flashing rills,  
Is traced in beauty mead and dale  
With charms forever new,  
But left its blessings on the vale  
Where flows the Kickapoo.  
O favored land! No foot hath trod  
Through fairer paths than thine,  
Where hills uplift their crests to God,  
And speak his power divine;  
Where valleys breathe of peace and rest  
Fresh as the morning dew,  
And Vernon, on her own warm breast,  
Impearls the Kickapoo.  
Above me bends the clustering boughs,  
The cliffs around me stand,  
And heavenward rear their giant brows  
In beauty calm and grand.  
I linger lovingly and long  
Beside these waters blue,  
And yearn to give thy name to song,  
O tranquil Kickapoo.  
But men will come in after days  
Thy wondrous charms to see,  
And many an abler tongue shall praise  
Thy matchless scenery—  
God shield thee by his holy arms,  
And every wrong subdue,  
And keep thy dwellers safe from harm  
O happy Kickapoo.

by Rev. Wm. Haughton  
August, 1882

## CHAPTER I

The early history of our village and surrounding area would not be complete if we only recorded the story of the white man and his experiences, so let us go much farther back into time and see what we can find. Looking into the pages of different history books pertaining to this part of Wisconsin we have found that there is abundant proof that the whole Kickapoo Valley, as well as other areas in Richland Co., were settled by a race of men known only as Mound Builders. They roamed these wooded hills and valleys long before the time of the Indians, who even had no memories of their early predecessors.

There may have been races of men here before the Mound Builders, but if so, they were too barbaric and too roving to have left any traces of their existence. The Mound Builders, who were a peculiar people, left scattered along the bluffs and rivers, many mounds. What they called themselves, no man knows, because they left no written records. We infer they were industrious and peaceful from the evidence found when some of their mounds were excavated.

Many of these mounds were built in peculiar forms, representing birds and animals. Found in them were many implements, made of stone and copper and beautifully fashioned.

These early builders left many of their monuments to civilization right here in our village, part of them being in Mound Park, from which it derived its name, and others of them on the hillsides of Mount Nebo. There seems to be at least thirty-two scattered over an area of about one hundred acres. The early settlers, using their imagination, gave these mounds their names. The largest one of all was called the Eagle. The wings and tail are extended as though sailing in the air. From tip to tip, the wings measure about thirty rods. Not far from this one, is another one, called the Hawk, which is only eight rods in length. The two others near by, side by side, with wing tips touching and facing south, are called the Wild Geese. The average heights of these mounds, at the time the country was first settled, was from two to three feet.

People have supposed, from the name of the Kickapoo valley, that it was once inhabited by the Kickapoo Indians. If that is true, it was long before our early settlers came, because at the time of the settlement of this area, the tribe of Winnebagoes roamed, hunted and had their encampment in the valley and surrounding hills.

The legend of the Indians, is that they were supposed to have come from Asia, by way of Bering Strait, or to have drifted across the Pacific in small vessels. As a race, they were not as thrifty as the Mound Builders appeared to be. The tribe in this area were friendly to the early settlers here which no doubt, was due to the fact that they were well treated and left to roam at will and consequently the Indians peacefully gave way before the advance of civilization and moved further westward.

Then came the brave pioneers, over hill and dale, through primeval forests and over unchartered trails. Of the hardships endured, no tongue can tell. Absolute want were their lot while trying to establish homes for themselves and their families. We ask ourselves what was back of this great desire to conquer new frontiers, that men would give up their established homes and endanger their lives and those of their loved ones? Was the stamina and grit of those pioneers greater than that possessed by the race of people today? Could we of this present generation, step out and conquer with all

odds against us, the obstacles that our forefathers had to meet? Do we seek new frontiers to conquer with the same enthusiasm?

Pioneering is not all finished. It is only begun. Our forefathers only paved the way to greater frontiers to conquer and left us a heritage rich in courage and faith.

It is high time that their history should be put on permanent record, so let us hasten to make their deeds a monument that will long outlast the stone or bronze which marks their last resting place. Let their epitaph be, "They have builded better than they knew, and departed, they have left behind them, footprints in the Sands of Time".

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## CHAPTER II

### EARLY TRAIL BLAZERS

The first known venture into this part of Richland County was in the month of May, 1843, when Daniel and Isaac Darnell left the Wisconsin River on horseback, at or near the Village of Richmond, now known as Orion, and made their way into unexplored country.

They traveled north on the dividing ridge between the waters of Pine River and Eagle Creek. After several days, they made camp one night near a large spring which later became known as the head waters of Camp Creek. While there they cut the initials of their names on a tree, which were found many years later. These two men were probably the first white men who ever saw Camp Creek, or came into this part of the country.

Nothing more is known of this vicinity until the year of 1851, when R. J. Darnell was employed by the citizens of Orion for the sum of ten dollars, to blaze a trail from there, between the waters of Pine River and Eagle Creek, to the north line of the county.

He left Orion about the 10th of May, 1851, in company with Mr. Hanchett, whom he had engaged for a companion. The provisions for the journey had to be carried on their backs. Mr. Darnell furnished all except the meat, and Mr. Hanchett's job was to furnish that by his skill at hunting.

They followed the dividing ridge between the streams named and arrived at the north line of the county after three weeks of hard labor. Anyone acquainted with the country will recognize how difficult it must have been to find and follow the main ridge through dense forest because of the multitude of spurs that lead out from it in all directions. At one time, their only food for two days consisted of three red squirrels, but in spite of these hardships, they pressed onward, through the wilderness, marking a path for civilization into this country.

The same year, Mr. Darnell, John Price and Adam Bird, were appointed commissioners to survey and locate a county road from Orion to open communication with Viroqua, Bad Axe County, now called Vernon County. In the month of June they left Orion with a surveying party of nine and an ox team and cart, to haul their provisions and equipment.

They followed the old blazed trail to Section 36, which is the S. E. Section of Forest Township. They made a temporary camp there, and then followed the section lines to the west line of the county.

This is where the John Gribble family afterward settled. Before completing the survey, they sent the team back to the camp in Section 36, to await their return. After completing the survey, they went to spend the night with the John Harrison family, at the forks of the Kickapoo River. The next evening, when they returned to camp, they laid down on the ground for a night of rest, in a heavy thunderstorm. Next morning, without breakfast, they started down the trail for Orion, but the day was far spent before they caught up with a provision train. These are only a few of the hardships that the pioneer trail blazers of this country endured.

Mr. Darnell now was in position to act as guide and show land to emigrants who were moving in a steady stream, westward.

In March, 1852, he showed Alexander Barclay, land in Sec. 35, which he entered on April 7th. This was the first entry made in the present Town of Forest. Mr. Darnell, himself, filed on a piece of land about this same time.

On July 8, 1853, J. P. Nehr entered on a part of Sec. 34 and 35. These were all the entries made until 1854.

This same year money was raised to pay for cutting the logs and brush out of the road surveyed in 1851 from Orion to the west line of the county in Section 31.

March 31, 1854, Mr. Darnell left Orion to show land to Daniel Bender, John Booher and Levi Gochenaur. They immediately went on to La Crosse and Daniel entered 240 acres from the Government at \$1.25 per acre, the established price at that time.

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### CHAPTER III

#### EARLY SETTLERS OF TOWN OF FOREST

Although several men had ventured into the wilderness to make claims on different pieces of land, Daniel and William Bender were the first who really came to stay. They left their families at the small Village of Orion, the outpost on the Wisconsin River, and brought enough equipment to build their home. No longer than it took to put up the house, it is easily understood that it was a primitive affair. As soon as it was finished the men returned to Orion and on the 23rd day of April, which fell on Sunday, they arrived back at the homestead. There was much to be done in getting settled, and the odds were much against them, but this did not daunt their spirits, for they were sturdy men. They began clearing land, and soon had thirty-seven apple trees set out that spring, as well as a large garden planted to grow food for their families, sufficient to carry them through the coming winter. It was forty miles back to a grub stake and their only means of transportation was ox and cart, but there was an abundance of wild game in the woods. They had no stoves but did their cooking over a fireplace. Their beds were made of poles with ropes strung between them for springs. The mattresses were ticks filled with leaves. Although they knew that life would be rough for the next few months ahead, they were happy, looking to the future when they would conquer the wilderness.

Following is a list of more settlers who came to this wild country to make their future homes: Peter Bender and wife, parents of Daniel and William; also brothers and sisters, namely, Samuel, and wife; Elias,



**FAMILY OF BENDER BROS—1854**

Early Pioneers of Town of Forest. Top Row, left to right, Peter, Elias, William, Jonas, Emmanuel. Seated left to right, Daniel, Sam, Benjamin

and wife; Elizabeth Shafer and family; Jonas; Hannah and Susan; numbering about twenty-three in all.

The Gochenaur, Ambrose and Kanable families came in September of that same year. Each new group of emigrants made the Daniel Bender homestead their headquarters until the heads of the different families could locate their piece of land and build suitable shelter. There was little time to spare as winter was not far off. The larder of the Benders was stretched to the breaking point many times, but true hospitality reigned and the latch string was always out.

Throughout the entire summer and autumn of 1854 the immigrants continued to pour in. Laal Clift and brother, William, who were natives of Vermont; the Turners, of which more of their story will be told later in the history of Viola; Salma Rogers; J. L. Jackson; John Fuller; David Johns; J. P. Nehr; Jeremiah Clark and R. J. Darnell.

Johnny Gribble and family came that same year, locating on Section 31, out at the extreme western point of what is known now as Hopewell Ridge. He was a shoemaker, making boots for the men and moccasin shoes for the women, while the children, for the most part, went barefooted. His family consisted of Irvin, Lib, Jerome, George, Ellen, who later married Owen Gibbs, and Sarah, who married George Hull. They all played a part in the early history of the Town of Forest.

Doc Shambaugh, one of the most versatile and most widely known men of his day, came about this same time. He, in partnership with Salma Rogers, built the first saw mill in the town in 1857. He was an Herb Doctor, the woods at that time were full of his particular kind of roots, and he made good use of his time by gathering the herbs and drying them, using them to doctor the sick. He was a very religious man, and by his preaching, administered to their souls, as well as their physical needs. He would conduct evangelistic meetings along toward spring and usually had a class of converts, whom he baptized in the Kickapoo as soon as the ice was out. The first baptismal service conducted by him took place at Manning in 1857.

It was said of him that his education comprised of studying arithmetic eleven days and grammer seven; yet by perseverance and industry, he acquired a great fund of knowledge. His advice on how to keep well was worth much more than the how to cure, when sick. At his death, he was mourned by all, as he had endeared himself to the community with his untiring service to humanity.

John Crandal, a Baptist minister, entered land on Camp Creek. He stayed but a short time, moving further westward.

A Mr. Darnell settled on Ash Ridge. He ran a tavern and was postmaster in the town in 1855. He later turned the office over to Jeremiah Clark who ran a store on what is now known as the George Milum farm. The exact location seems to be near the bridge on highway 56.

Jeremiah Clark originally got the farm, where the store was located, as a land grant from the Government and in the past one hundred years it has changed hands but twice, George Milum having purchased it from Clark in 1891 and now his son-in-law, Ted Lepley, owns it.

The Walter and Sargeant families were among the early pioneers of Forest. They came in the year 1854 also. The Sargeants settled on the ridge, on the land formerly owned by Elmer Van Fleet. Garret Van Fleet, Elmers father, bought the land of Andrew Sargeant in 1870, he having moved here from Ohio, with his family. The land has remained in the Van Fleet family since that time. Duane, a grand-

son of Garrett, now owns it and Rudy, a great-grandson, operates it.

The Henry Walter family settled on the ridge south of the Sargeants. He was the father of Cyrus, Os, and Dave, and two daughters, married to Frank Kanable and Andy Toptine.

About the same time or a little later, Robert Dobson, wife and family, came from Pennsylvania and settled on Hopewell Ridge. Mrs Dobson was born in Ireland. Their family consisted of Thomas, John, Amos, Bel, Martha and Margaret. When not farming, Mr. Dobson, who everyone called "Bobbie", made barrel staves and delivered them to Muscoda, where he sold them.

Not only was the south half of the Town of Forest settled the year of 1854, but also the area along the west side of the Kickapoo River, north of what was later the Village of Viola. The first of these was Frank Lawton, who entered the land now owned by Jack Loveless. Then came Lum Simmons, Caleb West, Van Bennett and John Hubble. On the east side of the river were located Salma Rogers, John West, Alfred Loveless, Wm. Fay, John Welker, and Laal Clift.

A man by the name of Bryant, settled on a little clearing near the Lawton bridge. Near here was the Dick Lawton homestead. Then over the tunnel hill we found Amos Johnson, Earl Rolfe and the Russell and Hecock families. This part of the town was called the Lawton settlement.

On Goose Creek were located Ebenezer Bowker, the Matchey, Furnish and Slaback families and Wm. Gates. Joseph Blakley settled at the head of Blakley Hollow, then came George, Charley and Walter Blakley. Walter and Joseph later moved to the Town of Bloom. These families came to the Town of Forest from Pennsylvania. George Blakley played a part in the early history of Viola, in that he with the help of Alfred Gill, cleared the land where the Village stands, for Cyrus Turner.

At the head of Goose Creek we found the Coggins, Scott, Fifer, Carpenter, Drake, Black and Croninger families. Hardly any of the descendants live on the land which their grandfathers settled.

Eventually all the land in the northwest corner of Richland Co. was taken up and settled, and the pioneers were trying to subsist on what they could raise in their clearings. Their livestock ran at large, picking their living off the wild hay in summer and living on basswood shrubs in winter. If it had not been for the wild gingseng that grew in abundance here, the settlers would have had to go without many of the necessities of life.

The first road in the township was built by R. J. Darnell. It passed through the south tier of sections in Forest, from Ash Ridge, following the ridge out what is better known now as Hopewell Ridge. A short time later a road was built down Camp Creek, starting at Ash Ridge, on the Black River road, following the valley as far as the mouth of Camp Creek, passing Viola on the south side of the river, along the hillside, and then on to Kickapoo Center.

The first burial places in the town were usually private grounds, established on the farms as necessity required, but later, permanent cemeteries were laid out. Mrs. Daniel Bender, who died in May, 1854, just one month after the Benders settled in their new home, was laid to rest at the brow of the hill, a short distance from their cabin, and this plot later became known as the Old Hopewell Cemetery.

It has become the final resting place of many of the early pioneers

and is hallowed ground because of the early sacrifices they made and the heritage they left for future generations.

The Town of Forest, when first organized, contained townships 11 and 12 north of range 2 west. The first town meeting was held at the home of Wm. Ogden, April 3, 1855. Fifteen votes were cast, electing E. B. Tenney, chairman; Levi Gochenaur, Clerk; W. Ogden, treasurer; Asabel Savage, Assessor, Harry Bacon, Henry Hurless and R. J. Darnell, justices; R. J. Darnell, superintendent. The census taken in June of that year showed the combined townships to contain 226 males and 181 females, totaling 407

Late in the same year the township was divided and the south half was called Sylvan. Early in the spring of 1856 it was decided to hold a meeting to elect officers for the Town of Forest for the coming year. This election was held at the home of John Ambrose on the first day of April. The following officers were elected: Jesse Harness, chairman; J. V. Bennet and Wm. Mathews, supervisors; H. L. Turner, clerk; Andrew Carpenter, treasurer; Levi Kanable, assessor. At that time the total valuation of property was \$25,740.86. Of this amount, J. Clark claimed \$2,000. and J. P. Nehr, \$2,000. in personal property, and altogether there were 21,327 acres of land assessed.

No sooner had our families become adjusted to pioneer life when the Civil War broke out and one by one the men had to leave for the battle front. Every able bodied man between the ages of 18 and 40 years had to bid their families good-bye and for this they received \$13. per month. There was plenty of patriotism in the country. They erected a flag pole 100 feet high and every day the flag was raised, until the close of the war.

Company I, of the 12th Regiment, was formed in Viola by Hartwell Turner, who was its first captain. He stayed with the company for a year, then resigned and came home. Following is a list of those who were in the services: H. L Turner, Salma Rogers, Van Bennett, Lum Simmons, John Church, Charley Stoll, Jacob Benn, Abe Benn, Harry Benn, Johnathan Turner, John Loveless, Alonzo Clark, Emory Clark, J. B. Snow, D. B. Sommars, W. V. B. Richards, Adam Barton, S. D. Wiltrot, David Houston, J. M. Saubert, A. A. Wiltrot, E. C. Gill, G. W. Wise, James Morrow, Pete Fazel, L. S. Kellogg, Lute Kellogg, Ranson Kellogg, J. S. Kanable, J. R. Campbell, Jim Fazel, Toptine and son, Enos Drake, Reuben Drake, Osborn Brothers, Sam Neeley and Brother, Dick Lawton, Charley Lawton, Ben Lawton, George Lawton, Irvin Gribble, Tom Dobson, Jerry Kanable, Jonas Bender, Wm. Bender, Lyle Blakley, Laal Clift, Windsor Clift, Pulaski Bond, Jason Baldwin, Dave Mullendore, Robert Tate, John Walker, Otis Dupee, Lon Dupee, Simon Kanable, Dave Jennings, Harm Jennings, Wm. Sandmire, Isaiah Guist, Henry Schoffer, Jerry Turner, Ren Hill, Eph Sanford, Ira Sanford, Hiram Ambrose, Tewalt Beighley, Angus Barclay, John Dobson, Wm. Slaback, Newton Ward, Wm. Dowell, Valentine Ewing, Jarred Jennings, Elias Bender, Walter Crouse, John Miller, Sinclair Miller, George and Dall Wilder. The latter served four years without a scratch, came back to work in the saw mill and met death by falling on the circular saw. He had been working long hour shifts and fell asleep while on duty.

Six of these men never came back, they having paid the supreme sacrifice on the field of battle. D. B. Sommars lost an arm, Jacob Benn was shot through the hand and Henry Schaffer was shot through the face.

Many of these men had families they were forced to leave and the women and children suffered as much as the men in service. The

women kept the homes together and provided for the children, also doing a lot of work for the soldiers, such as making bandages for the hospitals and knitting garments. There were few men left at home. Among this list of soldiers, about twenty were from Forest and the remainder were from the Town of Kickapoo and Village of Viola.

Joshua Groves, a resident of Liberty township, Vernon County, enlisted in the 8th regiment and he told of how his regiment became known as the "Eagles". An Indian, of Chippewa County, enlisted in his regiment and brought along a pet eagle which he had raised and offered it to the regiment as a mascot. The eagle was accepted and a man was always detailed to look after it. They named the eagle "Old Abe" after President Abraham Lincoln.

The eagle was carried on the march, sitting upon a perch, which was carried by one of the men. When the men went into battle "Old Abe" would fly over their heads and out over the enemy lines, screaming loudly until the fighting ceased, when he would fly back to his headquarters and alight on his perch. The enemy tried every way to capture the bird alive but were unsuccessful. They would rather have captured the eagle than a whole regiment of soldiers.

It was strange how this bird would stick by the regiment and never once failed to show up after a battle and insisted upon being carried when the army was on the march.

When the war was over and the regiment returned home, the bird was given to the state and cared for until its death. The body was stuffed and mounted in the Assembly chamber of the State Capitol, where it remained until the fire which destroyed the building. The eagle was very large and measured six feet from tip to tip of its wings.

After the war was over, when things had settled back to normal the men started clearing more land and improving their farms, until in 1876, there were 22,235 acres of land assessed and valued at \$108,830. There were 311 head of horses, 860 cattle, 5 mules, 1,304 sheep, 920 hogs, 93 wagons, carriages and sleighs, 21 watches, 4 pianos, organs and melodions. The population was 912, including the Village of Viola, and the taxes that year were \$4,348.17. Now in 1954, seventy-eight years later we find that the Town of Forest has personal property assessed at \$344,380., real estate at \$806,600., with a combined valuation of \$1,150,980., and the population of the township approximately 520.

A century has now passed and the forests have given way to the broad cleared acres, and the fine farms of today are noted for their herds of dairy cattle and flocks of sheep. Up-to-date farm buildings have supplanted the log structures of 100 years ago. The ox teams gave way to the horses the latter part of the nineteenth century and now the auto and tractor have taken over the work.

Yes, a great change has taken place since the days of home made tallow candles, the home spun clothes and the cow hide boots. Today, you could not buy these articles in any store. Now-a-days, we press buttons and have electric lights, heat, power and refrigeration. What great inventions are ahead for us in this coming generation? Are not all of these improvements, products of the ground work laid by those pioneers who blazed the trail a century ago. Little did they realize what a hundred years would bring forth. Salma Rogers and all the other early settlers would surely be surprised if they could visit the Town of Forest. Wouldn't they marvel at the cheese factories, modern houses and barns, with flowing water at the turn of a faucet, even drinking cups for the cows, the good roads, telephones, automobiles and tractors, the marvel of electricity, radio, televisions and yes, what would they say upon hearing a peculiar humming sound and looking skyward, would discover a huge bird flying overhead? Who knows, maybe we have a few surprises in store for us in the future.

## CHAPTER IV

### SETTLING OF KICKAPOO TOWNSHIP

The Kickapoo area was really the first settlement in the surrounding vicinity of Viola. Its history is due in part to the early ventures of the Cushman family and a story of the pioneering experiences by Elias, a son of Abel Cushman, the first settler in this vicinity, is a good record of the early opening of this territory to civilization.

Probably the first cabin to be erected in this settlement belonged to Sam Estes, father of Mrs. Anna Griffin and Sam Estes, of Elk Creek. He had built his shack and cleared some land on what is now known as the Pearl Wilder farm. Mr. Estes had been one of a party which started down the Kickapoo River on a float which had been built at Whitestown. One night while encamped on the banks of the river, an argument arose, and Mr. Estes went no farther with the others of the party. He remained at the camp and here it was that he built his cabin and lived alone until Abel Cushman found him on his first trip into the Kickapoo country.

And now to go on with the story as told by Elias (Tink) Cushman.

Abel Cushman was married to Elizabeth Lawton in January, 1850 and in the spring of 1851 he started out to find his brother-in-law, Richard Lawton, and if possible, find a location in the white pine country where he could set up a saw mill on a stream that would empty into the Mississippi River. He left his wife at Jefferson, Wisconsin, and boarded a steamer at Galena, Illinois, and in due time he arrived at St. Paul, Minnesota. There he found that Mr. Lawton had sold out and had gone to the Kickapoo country.

Mr. Lawton took a steamer back down the river as far a Bad Ax, later known as Genoa, and inquired his way to the Kickapoo valley. He was informed that the country was infested with wild animals and desperate characters and if he attempted to make the trip alone, his bones would be picked by the wolves. He was directed to go down the river to Fort Crawford, now Prairie du Chien, and follow the Black River road to a point near Ontario. This trail lead through Viroqua and Westby, to points north.

Upon arriving at Ontario, he spent a little time looking over the country and found much white pine and hardwood, covering an area of twenty miles wide along the Kickapoo. While cruising around he made the acquaintance of a man by the name of Ostrander, located at a point later known as Oden, and there he learned that Lawton lived in a shack ten miles further down the river. He shouldered his knapsack and started out on foot, the better to get a line on timber possibilities. On the way he came to an Indian village where he was welcomed and he remained with them two days. Then he trudged on, finally arriving at the Lawton cabin, close to where the Lawton farm is now located. And again, he was disappointed, as Lawton had gone to Genesee, Wisconsin.

After he rested up a bit at the Lawton cabin, he again shouldered his knapsack and started down the river. After traveling seven or eight miles, he came to the Estes cabin.

After living alone for some time, Mr. Estes was indeed glad to see Mr. Cushman and entertained him for two weeks or more. Mr. Cushman tramped over the surrounding country and finally found a suitable location at the mouth of Elk Creek, which had a nice flow of water and plenty of fall, and here he decided was the place he had

been looking for, as logs could be floated down the Kickapoo from the white pine country to the north.

The problem facing Mr. Cushman now was to find a road leading into this area from the outside world. Mr. Estes knew of the Black River trail in Richland County and together, they went up Elk Creek to where, now is Sylvan Corners, then north to where the Hopewell cheese factory did stand, thence east to Ash Ridge and the Black River trail.

Cushman bid his friend farewell, promising to return in the near future, and going south down the trail to Port Andrew, on the Wisconsin River, he arrived home after three months of weary travel. His family was glad of his safe return for they had not heard from him in all that time.

He formed a partnership with Dime Lawton and during the winter they made plans to return to the Indian country on the Kickapoo. Together, they interested some neighbors to make the pilgrimage with them. Their outfit consisted of one yoke of oxen, one yoke of bulls, two cows, some chickens, household goods and an up and down saw mill. The party consisted of Cushman's, Lawton's, Mr. Gibbs (father of the late Mrs. Etta Kinder) and Isaac Osenbaugh. It took them three weeks to make the trip as they had to cut their own road through the brush and timber from Sylvan to the mouth of Elk Creek. The men had to walk to La Crosse to enter their land and then they went to work erecting cabins for their families.

Cushman built near the former location of Inland Park. He built a dam close by and dug a race fifty yards long, then built a pond about two acres in size. Booms were built to hold logs that would be floated down river to the mill. They finished the mill in the summer of 1853.

That spring Robert Wilson came, entered land where the Arnold farm now is, and ran a tavern. Later he had a postoffice established at that point. Mail was carried by horse back from Orion to Viroqua, by way of Readstown, one trip each week.

Many people stopped at the Wilson's, as many were working their way westward, looking for new locations.

In the spring of 1854, Elk Creek was pretty well settled. Families settling there were the Foreman's, Osborn's, Pete Neeley, Abe and Harry Benn, Sam Baldwin, the Chancy's, Toptine's, Tewalt and John Beighley, Jim Fazel, Enos and Reuben Drake, and the Briggs family. Later twelve men from these families enlisted in the Civil War and five lost their lives in the conflict.

Kickapoo Center was plotted out as a village in 1855. The first school house was built in 1854, probably the first in the valley. The first teacher was Isaac Osenbaugh. This building burned down and another was erected on the hillside close to Wilson's on the road now leading up the hollow to Hopewell Ridge, past the farm formerly owned by Ed Smith.

The river bridge was built in 1854. Sam Green built a store near the west end of the bridge. There were twenty houses at Kickapoo Center by the year of 1860, making it the largest settlement on the Kickapoo at that time.

The saw mill business was good and Pete Neeley erected a mill about half a mile up Elk Creek, above the Cushman mill. Osborn built a flour mill at the George Hocking farm. The first lumber rafted out of the Kickapoo was by Cushman's in 1855. The lumber was sold to a Dubuque, Iowa, Company, at \$7.00 per thousand feet.

A man named Harrison, built a saw mill at Manning, putting a dam on the west branch of the Kickapoo. This settlement around

the Harrison mill was called Newville. Some of the early settlers who located here were Mr. Baldwin and son, Jason, (grandfather of the late Fred Baldwin); F. C. Clark, who later lived in Viola; Wm. Geddes; Eph Sanford and two sons, Ira and Eph, father of the older Sanfords, now living in Viola; David Barrie, (father of the late Oscar Barrie), and Mr. Kellogg and sons, Loomis, Rant, Lewis and Heam.

The road north from Kickapoo Center was on the west side of the river. The first settlers along this road were Ira Estes, John Holcomb and Doc Hill. The latter had a tract of timber land running back into the hills and he was said to head a band of horse thieves. His confederates stole horses in Illinois and drove them north to the Kickapoo and hid them in the hills for a few days. Then these horses were taken into Minnesota where they were sold. If an owner of any of these horses had the courage to follow them into this country, he usually disappeared and was never heard from again.

John Holcomb owned the adjoining farm and he said he had seen as many as twenty horses and dozens of strange men on the Hill farm at one time. Hill kept enough men in his employ so that all roads were watched, as well as the boundary of his farm.

Their stealing was confined to horses until the outbreak of the Civil War. Then they became bolder and robbed every man they thought might have money, with special attention paid to those looking for land to purchase. A Mr. Rogers was robbed of \$1,000, and left for dead in the woods. But he recovered and authorities tried to fix the crime on Hill and his gang but they were able to prove an alibi. The country was getting too hot for Hill because of so many settlers, so he moved to Kansas. He was finally trapped and sent to a penitentiary.

After he left the Kickapoo, the lawlessness stopped but the bad reputation still clung to the valley. When a traveler from the Kickapoo would go to the city and register as being from this area, the hotel clerk would back up and regard the traveler with suspicion. It would not be long before everyone in the hotel would know about it and a close watch was made of their money and belongings.

Regardless of the bad reputation that the valley received because of Hill's operations, there never were a more honest bunch of men than the early settlers who came to the Kickapoo valley to make their homes, and all resented the reputation it had gained through the work of one gang. However, later in 1888, another incident took place which did not help the reputation of the country. It was the Drake murder. The deed was committed by Andrew Grandstaff who paid the penalty with his life when an angry mob hanged him to a tree in the court house yard at Viroqua.

There were strong political feelings back in 1860. This incident happened the year Abraham Lincoln was elected president. The old gentleman, Wilson, who was an ardent Democrat and had been appointed postmaster, under a Democratic president, was so incensed by a Republican being elected that he took the mail pouch and all supplies over to Reny Hill, a Republican, and threw it at his feet, saying, "Take your Lincoln sack, I won't have it". Mr. Hill later enlisted in the army so he took the mail sack with what few stamps he had left and gave it to Mr. Cushman who looked after the mail for three years, until the return of Mr. Hill from the war. During this time he ran out of stamps and wrote the government for a new supply. He had to make application for the postmaster job and was appointed by Lincoln. Mr. Hill was later appointed and kept the job until he moved away. The postmasters job would hardly be passed around that way now.

James Cushman worked for his father, Abel, in the mill at Kickapoo Center and the latter turned it over to his son when he

moved to Viola in 1864. At this time the elder Cushman bought the Turner mill at Viola and remodeled and equipped it with what was then up-to-date machinery.

When timber around Kickapoo became scarce, James also moved to Viola, and bought Ben Lawton's steam saw mill which was located between Viola and the river bridge east of town.

As Viola began to prosper and grow it eventually drew business away from Kickapoo Center and what at that time was expected to be a thriving town, settled back into a farming settlement and at the present time, no buildings remain of the earlier hamlet of Kickapoo Center. Even so, the country in this area is populated by prosperous farmers, whose direct ancestors were the back bone of the first civilization in this section of the Kickapoo Valley.

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## CHAPTER V

### PIONEERING IN EDUCATION

The first school in the Town of Forest was taught by Mrs. Daniel Bender in the Bender home on the farm now occupied by George Mullenore. This was a six weeks term in the summer of 1855. Later a school house was built at the top of Kanable hill. Whenever a settlement sprang up, it wasn't long before they felt the need of education and so building school houses was a very important job in the early pioneering days. Within the ten or fifteen years following the first settlements, there were several schools established in the town. One description would serve for all of them. They were without exception built of hand hewn logs. The desks were placed around the walls and the seats were made mostly of basswood logs, split in halves. On these rude and uncomfortable seats, pupils were compelled to sit the six hours of the school day. Wood was furnished by the parents in proportion to the number of children sent. Often it was drawn to the school house by the parents in the log and cut up by the pupils.

Most of the pupils found their way to the school house through the woods, roads being comparatively unknown. Along these trails they went to school by day, and as the social life of those days was very meagre, many evenings were spent, by young and old, going to spelling schools. They lit their way with torches made from the bark of hickory trees. Very little is ever heard of the old fashioned spelling bee now, but it is doubtful if any modern entertainment can equal it in lasting benefit to the participants. People would go miles to attend one of these events. The young men went to the "spellin' bee" because of some rosy cheeked lass, rather than because of any love of a spelling book, and it is also a known fact that parents went to "keep an eye on the young folks".

Writing schools were another supplement to the school system. Some one would appear in the neighborhood distributing samples of his fancy penmanship as an advertisement and then organize a class which met evenings in the school houses. There, equipped with pen, ink and foolscap, and the copy set by the master, all could pass a very enjoyable winter's evening and at the same time, develop great skill as a penman. There were beautiful penmen among those early pioneers that would put to shame the writers of today. Pen drawings were often made by the writing masters to advertise their skills. These usually took the form of birds, which allowed free play in sweeping

curves, flourishes and heavy shadings. The old Spencerian system placed great emphasis on the frills of penmanship.

The school curriculum was also helped by the singing school. These were held on winter evenings in the country churches. Rote singing was taught and anyone with a natural ability as a musician had a chance to develop it. Equipped with a tuning fork, hymn book, and portable black board, the old time singing master could usually find plenty of good voices to train. No piano or organ was needed when there were plenty of lusty bases and tenors to balance the voices on the distaff side of the congregation.

One famous singing master of pioneering days was Francis H. Young, who lived about a mile east of Viola. "Uncle Francis", a carpenter and cabinet maker by trade, rounded out his income by teaching singing. He not only sang but he played the violin, bass drum, snare drum and fife. His bass drum, home made, was often heard on still mornings as far away as West Lima. He was a rabid Democrat and after a Democrat victory in an election, one was sure to hear the booming of the drum, celebrating the victory.

The following story with a humorous touch occurred at the old school house at the top of the Kanable hill on Hopewell Ridge. The seats made of split basswood logs were used as toboggan sleds by the older boys in the winter to ride down the long hill during the noon hour. Not much effort was made by the boys to get back before the bell rang, so those who remained at school were compelled to stand up until their seats were returned. This story was told by John Morrow, one of those "older boys who enjoyed the extra long noon hour.

There was a uniformity of school books in those days, McGuffey's Readers, and in some localities the New Testament was used.

The disciplining in those early schools was much different than the methods used today. Although whippings were common enough, it's doubtful if anyone was much injured by them. Nor were there any psychological theories that whippings would spoil children by causing complexes or any other mental disturbances. The parents of large families had little time to reason things out with their children. Since they got plenty of thrashings at home, a few more at school were of no great consequence. The code was that the boys take their thrashings as bravely as an Indian, and they usually did endure the most severe thrashings without the slightest outward sign of pain. Girls were not often whipped but were slapped on their palms with a ruler, a punishment quite as severe to their pride as the application of hickory oil to the boy's legs.

The school year was divided into three terms, namely, fall, winter and spring, with usually two and one-half months in each. The winter term always meant a good attendance of the older boys and girls, who about ran the school as they liked. A good many times the pupils were older than the teacher and usually made things pretty uncomfortable for her at times. The requirements to pass a teacher's examination were very simple, all that was necessary to receive a permit to teach was to go to the township superintendent and answer a few simple questions and the applicant could start teaching, without having even graduated from a graded or country school.

The first change that was made in school laws was to have county instead of township superintendents, which was a full time job for one man as he spent much time going around to the various schools, inspecting and giving instructions. Later more rigid school laws were made, a county normal was started and those who wished to teach had to meet more requirements than they formerly did.

In 1905 the first country school graduating exercises were held

in the Town of Forest, in the Lower Camp Creek Church. For several years this continued to be the plan for graduation. Later the exercises were held in the Hopewell Church as it was a larger building. It was customary for each graduate to speak a declamatory oration, which was judged and the speaker rated according to his ability.

Later the graduation of the different schools over the county were held at the auditorium in Richland Center.

And now after a century of progress in our school system we find that they have kept pace with civilization and today we have well lighted and ventilated buildings where our children are assured every physical comfort and scholastic advantages of the present time. Because of better roads and traveling facilities, the trend seems to be toward consolidation of our school districts, and during the past ten years, many of our country schools have been closed and the pupils are being transported to city graded schools.

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## CHAPTER VI

### PIONEERING IN RELIGION

No sooner had our early pioneers arrived and built their crude homes than they began to feel their need for worshiping God. So their thoughts were turned to action and they immediately began building churches. In those days, the early settlers were poor in purse, and struggling against fearful odds, but where there is a will, there is a way. Like their first homes, these church edifices were simplicity in itself, but served the purpose for which they were intended. A century has gone by and through the faith of those early mothers and fathers, the foundation was laid in crude log churches which bears fruit today.

The first church services held in the town were in Bender Hollow, on the Peter Bender farm. Later a log building was erected, the foundation stones of which may still be seen, a short distance down the valley below the original homestead of Daniel Bender, on Co. Trunk G. A charter list of this early church cannot be located but it is mostly made up of the Bender, Kanable and Gochenaur families. The first resident pastor was the Rev. D. K. Young, who served in 1857-58, but in the very beginning, a visiting minister by the name of Adam Shambough, came to preach occasionally and during his lifetime, he is credited with converting many people to a firm Christian belief. It was under his leadership that the Bender class, as it was called at that time, was organized. The numbers increased until the little church in the valley would not shelter all who came. Plans were laid for a larger building and the site of the present Hopewell Church was chosen.

The timbers were cut from the neighboring farms and hauled to the Cushman mill. Rocks for the foundation were quarried from the field west of the church and the wall was laid by Ed Hibbard and George Harris. The cutting and hauling of the timbers was all donated labor. Jefferson Hankins and a man named Smith, were employed to do the carpenter work. They also made the pews and the pulpit. The carpenters idea of improving acoustics was to invert a ten gallon glass bottle in the attic above, with the bottle neck protruding.

The pastor at the time the church was being built, was the Rev. W. A. Taylor. The bell for the church was made in Stoystown, Pennsylvania, by Joseph Bender, a brother of the early Bender pioneers, Wm., Daniel, Elias and others.

The metal roof was placed on the building at the time of con-

struction and remains today in excellent condition. But two occasions can be recalled when minor repairs were needed and that was because of damage done by storms. The church steeple was once struck by lightning, but little damage was done.

The day of dedication was held in mid-winter. According to a news item in a Richland County paper, and we quote: "The new Hopewell church was dedicated February 2, 1890. A lecture on 'Immortality' was delivered Friday evening prior to the dedication services. Many of the citizens of Viola attended the program and the Viola choir furnished the musical part of the program, which contributed not a little to the evening's entertainment. The proceeds amounting to \$18.00 will be applied to the liquidation of the church debt. Dedication exercises were observed on Saturday and Sunday with Elder Hood officiating. The new church is worthy of the praise of all and cannot but highly speak of the people of the surrounding neighborhood", unquote.

At the time of the dedication, the name of the church was changed from Bender Hollow, to Hopewell United Brethren.

The beginning of the Sunday School dates back to the original church in Bender Hollow. Old Sunday School spellers were found in the church that were published in 1838. These were used in the early Sunday School services.

There are those present today who took part in the Singing School conducted in the log church under direction of Joshua Buroker.

Articles remain today that were used in the old church. The large square table used as a secretary's desk was made by Mr. Francis Young, also a stove poker, with a twisted handle and a shovel, which were made in the blacksmith shop of Peter Bender, about one-half mile west of the present church. Peter was one of the Bender brothers.

The artistic artificial graining of woodwork was done by Benjamin Rastall.

The 76th anniversary of the organization of the Hopewell class was observed at the church on September 10, 1933. Rev. Guy Bailey was the pastor at the time. It was also the 50th anniversary of the building of the present church. A thought brought out by the pastor was that, "the influence of those early ministers, and those sturdy Godly pioneers is felt in our midst today."

Sixty-five years have gone by since this edifice was built. In this year of 1955 the building still stands, a monument to those pioneers who built well. The membership was united to that of the Viola congregation of the Evangelical United Brethren church in 1953.

The first religious service held in our village was preached by Mr. Nehr, of the town of Forest, in the home of Cyrus Turner in the early summer of 1855. Soon after this a log school was built in the town plat laid out by Mr. Turner. Here our first Sabbath School was organized, a library from the American Sunday School Union was procured, and all worked out well in spite of difficulties.

Rev. James S. Lake organized a class in 1856 which was later known as the Methodist Episcopal Church of Viola. The church services continued to be held in the school house until 1876 when the society erected the present church building, 26x36 feet in size, at an approximate cost of \$750.00.

The first Board of Trustees were Messrs. Tubbs, DeLap, Snow, Tate and Waggoner. In the summer of 1898 the church building was remodeled and an addition built. Some time early in 1900 the basement was finished to be used as a dining room and kitchen. The Frank Rogers residence east of the church was purchased as a parsonage.

On September 24, 1942, the Methodist Church observed its 70th



**METHODIST LADIES AID**  
Meeting at John Wunsch home about 1912

anniversary of its foundation. Mrs. Ed Schroeder read a history of the church from its founding in 1872. We print the history as presented by her, as follows:

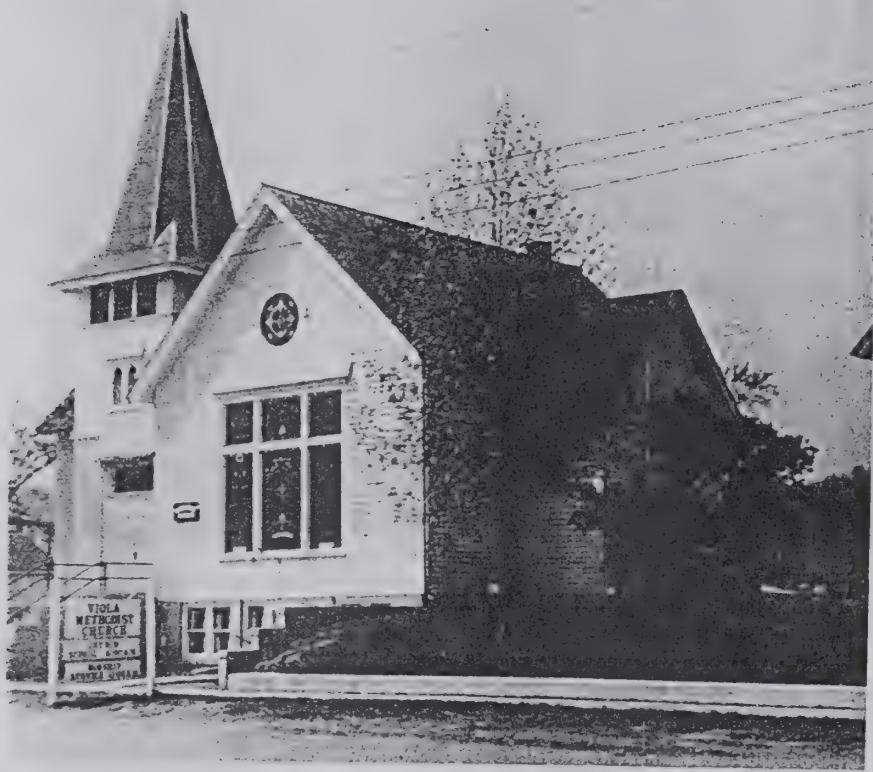
The Viola Circuit was formed at the 18th annual session of the West Wisconsin Conference held at Eau Claire, September 18, 1872, Bishop Gilbert Haven presiding. R. S. Mockett, local Deacon, was appointed to the charge as its first pastor, but was shortly replaced by J. F. Hopkins, also a local Deacon in the Springville Charge.

There were at this time, five appointments on the charge, namely, Viola, La Farge, Salem Ridge, Sugar Grove and Seeleyburg. The circuit was then part of the La Crosse District, with J. D. Searly the presiding Elder.

The year of 1876, the church record shows, was a year of hard work on the charge. Revivals were held at five different appointments from which much good was done. The new church at Viola was begun and nearly completed. Some changes have been made in the church building since that time.

In the latter part of Rev. Vincent's pastorate, the circuit was changed, and the Viola charge now includes Finley, Pleasant View, and the local church.

The Viola charge, at the present time, seems much encouraged and with a mind to work, under the leadership of our present pastor and his wife, Rev. and Mrs. Symmonds. Our church attendance is good. We have both morning and evening services. Our new Women's Society of Christian Service is thriving, also our Sunday School and mid-



#### THE METHODIST CHURCH

week services, and we receive encouraging reports from both Finley and Pleasant View.

In the long years since this charge was formed, many faithful pastors have come and gone. Rev. Vincent was with us the longest, seven years, but it is good to say, after all these long years, we are active in the Lord's work.

Other numbers on the program were as follows: Rev. J. A. Vincent, of Lancaster, former pastor here from 1910 to 1917, delivered the sermon and it was a masterful presentation, giving all something to think about. Rev. W. T. Walker, of Soldiers Grove, another former pastor, gave a short sermon. The singing was augmented by a special number by the Soldiers Grove quartette and was much appreciated.

The church was nearly filled and all gave close attention to the two and one-half hour program. District Superintendent Rev. P. Harold Gee, and Revs. J. A. Vincent, W. T. Walker and S. P. Symmonds, placed the conference "Veteran's of the Cross" marker on the grave of J. B. Braddock in the Viola cemetery, after a brief ceremony.

This concluded the anniversary services, and all felt that the 70



#### THE PENTECOSTAL CHURCH

years had shown marked progress in the first church to be organized in our village, up to the present time.

While Rev. Symmonds was pastor, much interest was taken in the church and the membership nearly doubled. During his ministry, the interior of the church was beautified with a lowered and sound proofed ceiling. The choir loft was moved from the rostrum to its present location. The floors were also refinished.

Following him, came the Rev. Lee H. Holmes, who served both the Viola and La Farge charge for three years.

Rev. Paul Nulton came to take his place in 1946 and while serving, was stricken with illness and passed to his reward in 1948. His wife then took over his work and served both charges successfully.

Rev. W. H. Thompson was the next minister and served the Viola circuit until the charge was divided in 1953.

Rev. G. W. Carlson was then assigned to the Viola circuit and is the present minister. He is an energetic young man and started an improvement campaign which included repainting of the church and parsonage, a new furnace for the parsonage and equipment for his study, also further improvements in the basement of the church.

Mrs. A. J. McCarty presented the church with chimes for the steeple in 1954 in memory of her parents, Mr. and Mrs. Jonathan Tur-



#### THE EVANGELICAL UNITED BRETHREN CHURCH

ner, pioneer members of the church. The chimes can be heard throughout the village every evening.

Mrs. C. E. Gear and brother, Virgil B. Mathews, presented the church with a large electric lighted cross to adorn the top of the church steeple, as a memorial to Mrs. Opal Mathews and Mr. and Mrs. Charles F. Mathews.

At present, the church is enjoying a spiritual awakening and prospects are bright for the future success of the Viola Methodist Church.

A century has now passed since the first church services were held in our village. In those one hundred years, many changes in the religious life of our people have taken place. The church edifice has been modernized to keep pace with civilization, new methods of Christian education have replaced the old ways, more stress is being placed on the education of the young people; altogether it has been a long road marked with much progress in material and spiritual gains. The past generations have built well and left a heritage that has stood the test of time.

While the Methodist Denomination was the first organized church in Viola, other churches sprang up in the nearby communities and near the turn of the twentieth century, two others were organized in the village. The first of these being the Christian Church in the part of Viola, called Mound Park, and when the new church was later built, it was located in that part of Viola. It was completed in July of 1905 but not dedicated until later in the year. The total cost of the building was a little more than \$1200.00. It remained an active church for more than twenty-five years. During the pastorate of Rev. Guy Bailey, it became affiliated with the United Brethren Church. Later the church building

became vacant for a time until it was taken over by the Pentecostal Faith in 1945.

Rev. Whitelaw, District Missionary for the Congregational Churches of Wisconsin, visited Viola and organized the first Congregational Church on April 12, 1901.

Rev. Whitehall spent several weeks in this place and at the close of a series of meetings, twenty-five united with the church, June 30th, Rev. E. O. Chapel became pastor and remained with the church four years, doing excellent work. October 11, 1904, Rev. Chapel resigned the pastorate, accepting a call to Lone Rock. John Evans, of Hammond, Wisconsin, became pastor. He was a man of scholarship and thorough training in the ministry and his work at Viola brought forth good results.

It was in 1904 that the Congregational Church was built and it was dedicated June 26 of that year. Its cost was \$3,600. when completed. The 1,600 pound bell was given by Senator and Mrs. O. G. Munson, of Viroqua. The interior woodwork was yellow pine, the sidewalls were plastered and the ceiling paneled steel and decorated in azure blue, pink and cream, with a gold leaf design over all. The rostrum was 25 feet long and 10 feet deep, circular in form. At that time it was one of the most handsome churches of its size in the state.

At the dedication, contractor George Hoffman, delivered the keys of the church to the pastor, Rev. Chapel, saying, "The church is now completed and I now turn the keys over to you."

There was a formal act of laying the cornerstone. A list of the contents of a box, which was deposited in the cornerstone, as follows: History of the organization of the church and a list of members, history of the Ladies Aid and the Willing Workers, a copy of the Intelligencer, picture of the church building, photo of the pastor, Rev. Chapel, photo of the president of the Willing Workers Society, Mrs. J. H. Frazier, and some small coins.

During the Dedication Services, music was furnished by the M. E. Choir, of La Farge. Other numbers were Fred Baldwin, as cornetist, Mrs. Minnie Hurless, violinist, and Mrs. Chapel as pianist. The Viola Choir also sang some numbers, a duet by Mrs. Lucy Tate and Mr. Plimpton, of La Farge. Mrs. Chapel and Mrs. Hattie Wells Loveless sang a duet. The ushers were R. L. Curry, Wes Fishel and L. L. Lathrop. This church served its community well, for thirty years, but was later taken over by the United Brethren Church.

The United Brethren Conference, having purchased the Mound Park Christian Church in October, 1930, became one of the leading congregations in the village with Rev. Guy Bailey as pastor. The rapidly growing membership had outgrown the small church edifice and as there was a great need for more room, it was debated whether to enlarge the present church or to acquire other property. The opportunity then opened up as the Congregational members on August 21, 1941, voted to turn their church property over to them, and so the United Brethren membership was moved up from Mound Park, and from that time, has occupied the building that was dedicated as a Congregational Church in 1904. Rev. George McAhren was pastor at that time, and after having served in this church for seven years, was transferred to Fennimore, as District Superintendent. He was followed by Rev. Gordon Core and the present pastor, Rev. Edward Zager.

In 1946, the Evangelical and United Brethren Conferences united, making this local church an Evangelical United Brethren congregation.

The church took one more important forward step, that being the union of the Hopewell members with those of the Viola church. This took place May 1, 1953. The church and Sunday School made rapid growth until it was necessary to build an addition to be used as Sunday

School rooms. This new part, as well as other needed improvements, was dedicated October 17, 1954.

About four miles east of Viola, in the town of Forest, a Baptist Church was built in 1880. In the year 1896, the Congregational Society through the efforts of Rev. Willan, organized a class and for several years, Sunday School and Church services were held at least once a month by Rev. Evans, from the Congregational Church. The church property was valued at about \$600. At the present time the church is closed and the people living in that area, attend churches in Viola.

At an early date the Baptist people built a church at Kickapoo Center. It was later served by Congregational ministers. It has been many years since this church has been used, the people of the community attending services elsewhere.

A Congregational Church was built at Manning in an early day with a membership of twenty. Rev. Evans supplied this church for some time. He also preached at Liberty in a small church that stood not far from the Liberty store.

The Finley or Ross Church had a membership at one time of about forty and was a part of the Viola Methodist circuit.

The trend in the past twenty-five years of religious history appears to be working toward the town and city churches. One by one the old country churches have closed their doors and in many cases, the building itself, has been wrecked or moved away, to be used for other purposes. This is due, partly to the recent development in the present means of communication, more automobiles and better roads. The problem reached such significant proportions that very recently, major religious organizations have found it necessary to study this movement in detail, for thinking people realize that the seed bed of society is the rural area. If our nation is to be strong, the rural area must have training in spiritual things as well as economically and physically. This problem has brought about the town and country movement in the church.

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## CHAPTER VII

### EARLY HISTORY OF VIOLA

We owe a great debt of gratitude to a man who, after traveling many miles into a land of wilderness, finally halted in his wanderings and casting his gaze about the wooded hills and meandering streams, called it good and pitched his tent, so to speak, on the bank of our little river, the Kickapoo, and laid out our village, which was later named Viola. Where else could Cyrus Turner have found a more beautiful location than right here in this little valley, nestled among the hills, with Mt. Nebo standing guard in its majestic beauty from its heights a splendid view can be obtained of the valley for miles in all directions. No doubt, the Indians used it as a signal point when they roamed this area and we know it was later used as a landmark for the raftsmen who plied the little stream that flowed at its feet.

According to previous articles that have been recorded in both Vernon and Richland County histories, these are the actual facts concerning the settling of Viola during the years of 1854 and 1855.

On the 6th of April, 1854, H. S. Turner, C. D. Turner and J. J. Turner arrived at Mr. Wilson's on the Kickapoo. On the 7th, they looked over the land in this vicinity on this side of the river and on the 8th they crossed the river and looked over the present site of Viola. They were so well pleased with the location that they set their camps and struck out for the land office at La Crosse where on the 11th, C. D. Turner entered the land where Viola is located. The land was laid out and

plotted in the spring of 1855. Each block contained four lots of one-half acre each. The first lots sold for \$10. each.

The aforementioned Turners, after entering their land at LaCrosse, returned to New York state for their families and on September 20th, they, with the Salma Rogers and Lyman Jackson families, arrived at the present site of Viola. C. D. Turner built a house and opened a store at about the same location as our present Drug store. He started out with about a \$700. stock of goods. His house, which consisted of three rooms, served as a dwelling, a store, later as a post office and school room. The school, the first in the town, was taught by Helen Jackson, a Miss of fourteen years, and was attended by eleven pupils. It was maintained in the summer of 1855. A Sabbath School was organized and J. P. Nehr preached the first sermon in this house, also in 1855.

There are no words better to describe the early experiences of this pioneer couple than used by the wife of the man who chose the site of our village and we quote the story as written by her in later life.

"A party of three young men, Hartwell, Cyrus and Jerry Turner, left the state of New York about the first of 1854, their destination being the Bad Axe country, near the Mississippi river, but wayworn and weary, from days of travel, they stopped for a short rest at Mr. Wilson's hotel at Kickapoo Center. Mr. Wilson told them of Government land up the river a few miles farther north.

So, after looking over the area, they concluded to stay and enter the land. Hartwell took land in what later was in Richland and Vernon Counties, and is now the Village of Viola. Jerry's land was in Vernon County, not far from the present village. Then they returned to their home state, after their families. When they came back, they brought other interested immigrants. This was about September first. Five families came at this time.

After making boxes in which to pack our household goods, we started out on our long journey, which was full of many interesting experiences. We came around the lake to Milwaukee, with our teams, and our journey was a pleasant one until we left Richland Center, which was a mere outpost on the trail. We then entered the woods. Sometimes there was a road, but more often, not. Crying children, upset wagons, camping out, made the journey anything but monotonous. Many of us walked beside the wagons as long as strength held out. The little children were carried in arms or on shoulders. We spent two nights in the woods and finally arrived at what to us looked like the jumping off place, better known as Kickapoo Center.

Cyrus left his family here a few days but the rest of the colony moved up the river to establish themselves in the log cabins which Mr. Jackson, Laal Clift and Hartwell Turner had built.

Cyrus looked over his land entries and proceeded to lay out town lines which are a part of the Village of Viola today. First, a log had to be hollowed out to make a canoe to ferry travelers back and forth across the Kickapoo, and then a double log building was erected on the east bank of the river at the horse shoe bend. Into the house he moved his family and all the household goods he owned. It was about the middle of December of 1854. He also built stables for his livestock and made his family as comfortable as circumstances would permit for the long winter. Part of this pioneer building was later used as a store, and the next summer, a school was taught and later a post office was established, all in the same building.

The winter of 1854-55 was spent in hauling provisions, making roads and getting the timber cleared so that the sun could shine through. House building soon became the order of the day as more pioneers came. The style of all the houses was the same, simple log cabins, with hand

hewn shingles, called shakes, in western vernacular, which were nailed on by placing poles across them, thus making a very picturesque roof and a well ventilated attic. The usual size of these cabins was 18x20 feet. This was the house of the pioneer, it was kitchen, dining room, pantry, bed room, nursery, and frequently the upstairs and down cellar for a family of a dozen people.

Into this one room are stored beds, chests, dishes, boxes, babies, pots, kettles, and all the trumpery and paraphenalia. You can well imagine what a paradise of commotion it is.

There is not the problem of 'keeping up with the Joneses' because there is equality, even in taking joy rides. All had the same mode of travel, namely oxen team, and all fared the same, on wild game, mush and milk, or the most dainty dish of all, pancakes with griddle slop, pumpkin butter or wild honey.

Our first religious sermon was preached in our home by Mr. Nehr, of Forest, and the summer of 1855, a log school house was built near the county line, in a remote part of the town plat. Here our first Sabbath School was organized, a library from the American Sunday School was procured and we did well in spite of all difficulties.

In 1855, a family by the name of Algers, came and their daughter, Sarah, married John Fuller. The marriage was performed at Kickapoo Center, by Mr. Wilson, the Justice of the Peace. The bride and groom walked down to the river where the ceremony was to be held and there, under a canopy of heaven, cheered by the rippling music of the waters, the sacred pledges were taken. This was the first wedding in this area.

During the winter we had to exert ourselves considerably to keep from freezing, but with the heavy work to be done by both men and women, there was not time to sit down to freeze. We wrapped up snugly in buffalo robes and bear skins at night and if we survived the night, the sun would shine upon us at about ten o'clock and relieve us of some of the cold, at least mentally if the thermometer was placed in position to get the direct rays of the sun. One boy is known to suggest that the thermometer be brought in the house to thaw out.

In 1856, Mr. Hull and family came and moved into a log cabin. The day they moved, October 1st, a son was born, Jasper C. Hull, by name. This was the first birth, but not in the village, as their cabin was not included in the town plot. That same fall we built a small plank house where Mr. Cushman's house now stands and moved there.

Wm. Mack, a half breed from Picatomic country, brought out the store we formerly lived in, and he built a wooden structure, which is now attached to Mr. Tate's store (part of the present Keach Market). A Mr. Goodrich built a plank house in the village and his little daughter Libbie, died shortly after they came. This was the first death in the settlement. A short time after that, our son, Willie Turner, became ill. Dr. Gott, of Viroqua, was called, but his skill was of no avail. The child's death was a crushing blow upon our family.

Later, there were three graves, those of Mr. Keith and Willie and Freddie Turner, which were between the residences of Charley Tate and Nelson Burgor store. These were disinterred in 1869 and removed to the Viroqua cemetery, along with the remains of William Turner.

In 1857, Viola Mack was born and given a lot in the village because she was the first child born in the village plat. It was also in this year that Cyrus bought out Mr. Mack and began buying ginseng. This was a thriving business in those days. The clarifying and drying was carried on by James Turner. Cyrus built another store and the old building was used as the drying house for the ginseng. This building became a part of the H. C. Cushman building.

Our teachers were Helen Jackson, Salma Rogers, Jennie Loveless,

Marion Gill, Mrs. Gott, of Viroqua, and Miss Dailey, of Readstown. Mr. George Nuzum preached here often and general good feeling prevailed under his supervision.

Our postoffice was established and mail was carried from Viola to Kickapoo Center.

In the fall of 1856, Harry Turner, Mr. Gill, Mr. Loveless, Amos Fuller and families, came. Harry bought out Lyman Jackson.

In 1858 Cyrus Turner gave several acres of land for a cemetery on a mound east of the school building. This did not suit and was outlawed.

Our second pioneer house was moved in 1860 and Mr. Cushman erected one for his family.

At this time general political excitement prevailed and the war was on. Jerry Turner enlisted, was made 2nd Lieutenant, then later, a 1st Lieutenant, and finally, Captain of Company H, 5th Wis. Infantry. These words were written by Benjamin Lawton in a letter back home: 'He fell while charging on Mary's Hill back of the city of Fredericksburg. He was a brave and noble soldier. He was the mainstay of Co. H and I tried to get his body embalmed and returned home but because of the equipment, he had to be buried in the city. He was killed May 3, 1863.

Company I of the 12th Infantry, was organized and drilled here until ordered to headquarters. Hartwell Turner was Captain of this Co.

From 1861 to 1864 it was war, war, war, until scarcely an able bodied man was left in the town of Forest in 1865. Cyrus was quite sick but was drafted and Dr. Terhune, of Viroqua, reported that he was under a doctor's care. Later he was forced to give up his mercantile business and sold out to Mr. George Tate.

A new school building was erected in 1867. Cyrus eventually regained his health and built another store which was later taken over by Mr. Waggoner. He also bought out the steam saw mill but had to sell out as his health began to fail. Every line of his business was settled and in the spring of 1869 he purchased land in Missouri country and moved his family there in the spring of 1870. He partially regained his health but on the 5th day of March, 1874, he passed away at the age of 51 years. His remains were sent to Viroqua and there the last rites were given him by the Masonic Order. He is gone from us but his life still lives, for he was a kind husband and an intelligent father to his son, Dewitt C. Turner.—Unquote.

Following the plotting of the village, many events took place in rapid succession. In 1856, H. L. Turner built a dam across the Kickapoo and erected a sawmill. They were located not far from the site of the concrete dam and power plant that was removed in 1952.

The next year, 1857, Mr. Turner put up a grist mill and equipped it with one run of buhrs. The same year a blacksmith shop was built by Amos Fuller. The post office was established in 1858 with C. D. Turner as postmaster. He was followed by G. H. Tate and W. J. Waggoner.

Jerry Turner made a business of buying ginseng, paying ten cents a pound for the green root. He built a large roller, twelve feet long, covered it with screen, on which he placed the green roots. This he lowered into the Kickapoo and let the current of the river wash it. After it was cleaned, he put it on racks to dry, to be made ready for market. Mr. Turner later enlisted in the Civil War and gave the supreme sacrifice. Our first Relief Corps was named for him.

In 1864, H. L. Turner sold his mills to A. C. Cushman and moved to Green Bay. Mr. Cushman moved to Viola and remodeled the mill and put in a circular saw with a capacity of 8,000 feet per day. This saw was purchased in New York and had to be hauled here by ox team from Milwaukee. It was the first circular saw in the state. With the coming

of the Cushman family and their lumber jacks, the village began to grow, also the soldiers began returning from the Civil War and those who had been employed in the mill at Kickapoo Center before the war were given employment in the Viola mill. They are as follows: Irvin Gribble, as bookkeeper, Tom Dobson, Jerry Kanable, George Wilder, Lon Clark, Jake Benn, and Emory Clark. The mill was run day and night eight months of the year, and the other four months it was run in day time only. It took twenty-five men to operate the mill and as many more were employed on the river.

In 1866, Cushman bought the Cyrus Turner property which included all the land east of the county line and north of Commercial street, excepting the block owned by George Tate. At that time there was a knoll of land on what is now Main Street and where the stock yards is located and on this knoll Cushman erected his buildings, in a setting of white pine trees. He had a large house and boarded all his men, keeping three or four hired girls to help with the work. Some of these men were pretty rough but all were good at heart. They sowed plenty of wild oats and were known as Cushman's forty thieves, although they never stole anything and were well liked.

George H. Tate came to Viola in the fall of 1864 and bought out Jacob Nehr, who had owned the block where the Farmers State Bank now stands. Mr. Tate built a one story building and went into the general mercantile business, hauling goods from Lone Rock. A part of the building still stands at the back of the Keach Meat Market.

Mr. Tate was the first merchant to buy what the people had to sell, such as butter, eggs, maple sugar, ginseng, hides, wool, paper and rags. Their house, which formerly stood on the Farmers State Bank corner, has since been moved and remodeled and is occupied by Lewis Henry. A few of the older people might remember Grandma Tate as she worked among her flowers. She gave many bouquets to passers-by, over the fence surrounding her lawn, and furnished lots of flowers for funerals and other occasions.

In the store, Mr. Tate kept barrels of dried fruit and light and dark brown sugar. Later, he had white sugar in little white squares. He had tea, crackers, etc., in large wooden boxes and barrels and weighed out the different articles into paper pokes which were hand made, there being no commercial paper sacks at that time. The green coffee came in bulk and everyone had to roast their own in the oven and then grind it before each meal, as needed. He kept salted pork which he had butchered, and then cured in barrels.

The house, now owned by Tom McCollough, on the north side of the locker plant, was Mr. Tate's barn, where he kept a team for hauling produce to the railroad and bringing goods for his store in return. He also kept a driving horse and a cow or two. Jake Benn was his teamster for years and he kept the horses fat and slick in spite of all the trips over poor roads, first to Lone Rock before the railroad, and then later, to Richland Center and Viroqua.

Mr. Tate, at one time, owned the land now occupied by the Viola cemetery and he later deeded the land to the village for cemetery purposes. He also owned the entire block which now takes in the Farmers State Bank and Community building. The railroad, when it came to Viola, took the north half of his property for the depot and right of way. The buildings on the west side of the block were used as storage sheds for his produce. A house stood between the sheds and store. His son, George, lived here, his wife was the former Ellen Clift, daughter of Laal Clift, another early pioneer. She was a school teacher who at one time taught school in the Bender district. Ephriam Gochenaur and Hulda Bender, who later became Mrs. Gochenaur, were

some of her pupils. The Gochenaurs were the parents of Abner, who now resides in Viola.

George E. and Ellen Tate's first child was born in this house west of the store in 1875. She is known to all as Mrs. Ella Southworth.

About this time a company was formed to build a railroad from Readstown, up the west branch of the Kickapoo, which would miss Viola. This caused a small boom in Readstown so Mr. Tate sent his son, George E., to run a general store in that town. In the meantime the older Mr. Tate took his younger son into partnership with him in his store business at Viola. When the railroad plans fell through, George E. left Readstown and moved to a farm five miles north of Viola, known as the Bert Southworth farm. Charles Tate, the younger son, married Lucy Tinker, of Viroqua. She was Viola's music teacher, both voice and piano, for years. They had two children, Frances and Myron.

By June of 1865, Viola had a population of 35 people. The mercantile business at that time was represented by Cyrus Turner and Geo. H. Tate, lumbering by A. C. Cushman, hotel by Alfred Hull and blacksmithing by Sam Groves and Amos Fuller, who shod more cattle than horses and the price was \$4.00 for a set of sixteen shoes. John Commins had a wagon shop.

Most of the residences were located on Commercial street, east from the bridge. These houses were made of rough pine boards, placed up and down, with strips four inches wide, nailed over the cracks, both inside and out, without plastering.

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## CHAPTER VIII

### VIOLA, 1875—1900

During the following ten years several changes took place. The population increased to 125, new business places sprang up and others changed hands. George Hull built a building where the Wheeler barber shop now stands and ran a saloon. Marian Morgan, a new comer, opened a blacksmith shop. H. Haskell bought out the Cyrus Turner store, ran it a few years, then sold out to J. W. Sellars. Thus, in 1875, the list of business places included the following: General Merchandise, G. H. Tate & Sons; Dry Goods, Groceries and Drugs, Sellars & Cushman; Merchandise and Drugs, Burgor and Chas. Mathews; Hardware, J. M. Doudna; two Millinery Shops, Mrs. Sellars and Mrs. Turner; Wagon and Blacksmith shop, P. Leibert; Wagon shop, L. Gorsuch; Boot and Shoe shop, J. C. Truesdale; Hotel, A. H. Hull; Saw and Grist Mill, A. C. Cushman; Grist Mill, Turner and Waggoner, run from the mill race on Camp Creek; two doctors, DeLap and Goyer and one Veterinarian, N. Ward. A little later, Irvin Cushman built a store and went into the Mercantile business. This building originally stood between the Odd Fellow hall and the Shamrock building. The Cushman Grist Mill was located near the electric power plant and was operated by water power from the race of the old wooden dam.

In the spring of 1883, Peter Young built and equipped a cheese factory on the corner north of the present E. U. B. church. The house now standing there is a part of the old factory. The factory was later sold to Irvin Cushman, a son of A. C. Cushman. Mr. Potter was the cheesemaker. Ed Lepley, a veteran cheesemaker of the present day, and a mere boy of thirteen at the time, worked in the factory, and it is here he learned the trade that later became a successful venture as he has received several silver and gold medals in his life time for the cheese he has made. During the time he helped Mr. Potter in the



**OLD WOODEN DAM**  
Cushman Mill at right. Built in early 1860

factory, it was necessary for the cheesemaker to be gone for two or three weeks and as there was no one to operate the factory, Mr. Lepley was left in full charge and he made cheese all alone. He was only fourteen years old at the time.

The Cushman family owned most of the land in what is now the Village and farmed most of it. Where the school buildings stand was a calf pasture, and the calves were fed whey from the factory near by. It was Mr. Lepley's secondary job in spare time from cheese making to carry whey to these calves. The barn where forty cows were milked by hand, stood on the corner that is owned by the Methodist Brotherhood. This land mark was torn down a few short years ago.

The first circus visited Viola in 1875. It was known as the Burr, Robbins' Great Circus. They set up their tents in Hull's meadow, close to the river. They had several cages of wild animals, including the elephants, lions, tigers, and camels. It was known as a wagon show, traveling by horse power and it took several wagons to move the circus. Tink Cushman, a son of one of Viola's first pioneers, tells the story and we repeat it in his own words: "I took the contract for watering the elephants for a free pass to the show, including the side show. I thought the elephants would drink all the water in the Kickapoo. It was a great day for us kids, as we had never seen wild animals before. People came from many miles and it was estimated that the crowd numbered around 2500. Of course, the show had a few fakers, playing the shell game, three card monte, etc. Some of our men folks tried to beat their game, and it was said, the fakers walked off with at least \$500 of Viola's good money."

Ringling Bros. once visited Viola with their circus. That was in 1880. There were only four brothers, who put on all the show. They had a small tent, did tumbling, trapeze acts, etc. The next year they branched out with the addition of a side show and carried a buffalo and a cage or two of small animals.

In the first years of the village the business men freighted all their goods from towns on the Wisconsin and Mississippi rivers. When



COMMERCIAL HOUSE—1900-1910

the railroad came to Richland Center, they hauled their goods from that place. One of those veteran freight haulers was Jacob Benn. The branch line to Viroqua brought their merchandise ten miles nearer and so it was hauled from that terminal until the coming of the Kickapoo valley railroad as far as Soldiers Grove in 1892 and Readstown in 1896.

Much mention has been made up to this time of the saw mills in and around Viola. The wealth of timber in the Kickapoo country, made lumbering the chief industry of the valley, and logging, skidding, scaling, sawing, and running the river were every day terms for more than one generation. Logging was done mostly in the winter when ice prevented river work and because of snow and the ground frozen. Crews of men worked early and late, felling the trees, trimming off branches, cutting the trunks in lengths for sawing and hauling them directly to the mills or the edge of some steep hill facing the river where they were rolled down a cleared logway and piled along the banks to be floated downstream in spring to the nearest saw mill to be sawed into lumber of different dimensions.

Back to the time of the settling of this territory, much of the finished timber products were rafted down the Kickapoo. Much of this lumber came from up river towns of Ontario, Rockton and La Farge, the rafts passing by Viola. At this time the river lads would tie up for the night and be "flooded out" early the next morning. These men usually paid a call on the village taverns and the results were invariably the same, a "free for all", in which the brawniest arms carried off the honors, and most of these river men left the next morning with faces disfigured and their bodies bruised, but they always agreed with one accord, that they had had a good time in Viola, while they stayed.

In 1880, Al Guess built and operated a small hotel, located where the Henry Clift Hardware and Postoffice now stands. He had no com-

petition until 1891, when George Gerlach appeared on the scene and built a very modern building, for the times, and it was known as the Commercial Hotel. Harley Henthorn and son, Vincent, now have their up-to-date Undertaking and Funeral Parlors in this building. Both Gerlach and Guess were well known to the traveling public and were friendly rivals for the business of the commercial traveling men who used livery teams in the early period and in later years, used the railroads for means of transportation.

Viola really became a thriving town when the first newspaper was printed in 1890. The first printing press was very small and the print shop was in two rooms over the Mathews General store. The Intelligencer, as it was then called, was edited by Cliff Wells, and following his death that same year, his wife, Gertrude, took over the editorship. She married John H. Frazier a few years later, and together with her husband, they continued to be associated in the publishing business. She was also postmistress for sixteen years. The print shop was later moved into a building near the location of the Wadham's Oil Station. The postoffice was in the same building.

At the time the Frazier family were editing the weekly paper, an incident that is worthy of mention, took place. It concerned Rose Poff, daughter of one of Viola's Physicians. She had been educated in our local schools and in preparing herself for teaching, she enrolled in the La Crosse Normal. Later, she taught in this same school. About this time, while attending a revival meeting in a neighboring city, the minister was speaking of the great need of missionaries in various places and particularly the Kickapoo Valley. He spoke of the corruption and crimes, such as horse thievery that was supposedly taking place in this region and asked for a free will offering to be used in Mission work in this area. Rose Poff, being very loyal to her home community and knowing that the Kickapoo Valley was being misrepresented, got to her feet and told the minister that Missionaries were not needed, that there were as good schools and churches as could be found in any other locality, and furthermore, the people were law abiding citizens, also they could give their money elsewhere where it was really needed.

Upon returning to her home town, she told of her experience at this meeting and because she wanted to enlighten people elsewhere, as to the true facts about this beautiful valley, she asked the help of Mrs. Gertrude Frazier, in the writing of a book which would tell the geographical and historical truth about this region. These two women bravely undertook this tremendous job which meant many months of research. They drove a team of ponies hitched to a light buggy, from Wauzeka to Ontario, gleaning facts and historical data which later, at the end of the summer months, they compiled into a book which they named, "The Kickapoo Valley, the Gem of Wisconsin".

A short time prior to 1890, C. F. Mathews had severed his connection with Nelt Burgor in the Dry Goods and Drug business and built for himself a store, which is the present Chub's Skelgas Appliance store. Besides General Merchandise, he kept a supply of drugs and did barbering as a side line. After the printing office was moved from the rooms over the store, a cigar factory was maintained which employed two full time men and occasionally, extra help was needed.

The banking business was in the hands of N. H. Burgor, which was established in 1891. In 1894, Mr. Burgor erected a brick building which was used for several years as the Viola Bank. He continued in the Drug business in the same building. Later, when the first telephone line was built in our town, the exchange was operated here also.

From an old bank report for the year 1896, it shows that the capital and surplus was \$10,000. and the total resources to be \$24,000.

In addition to his banking, mercantile and agricultural interests, Mr. Burgor dealt in real estate and wrote insurance.

In this same era, Jap and George Hull had the only Meat Market in Viola, in a little one room building built under a large maple tree, where the brick building known as the "Shamrock" opera house stands.

James Treseder ran a Hardware and Undertaking establishment in or near the present Morris Super Market.

Viola became the northern terminal of the Crawford County telephone line around 1895. Two other lines were completed about the same time, one with La Crosse and one with Richland Center.

In the early 90's, Viola had two physicians; Dr. C. M. Poff, who had his office in his residence where the Melvin building now stands, and Dr. Oranger, whose office was also in his residence, which is known as the Grant Bender house. Dr. Belt, one of the early Physicians, built and used a part of what is now the American Legion building, for his residence and office for several years. Dr. Burns came to Viola the latter part of the Nineties and had his office in the residence north of the present Dr. Meboe office.

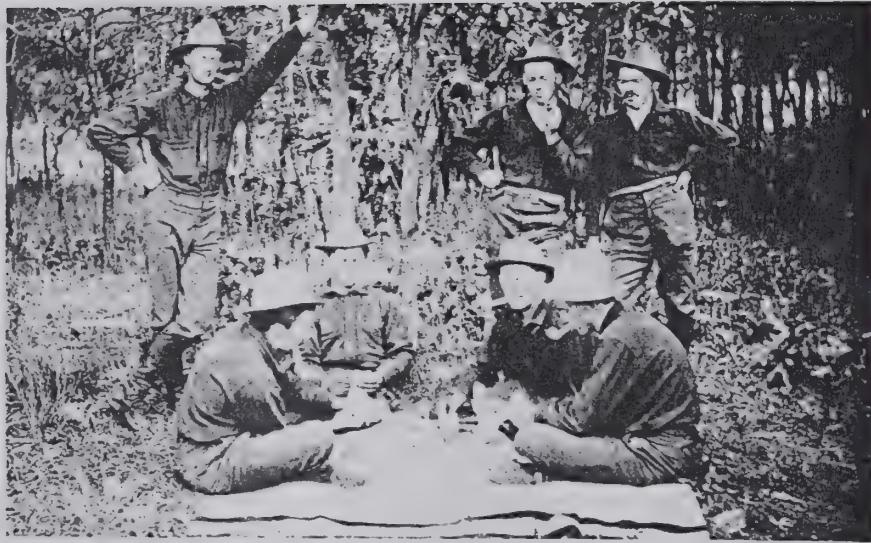
The Waggoner Dry Goods store, located on the corner now occupied by the Standard Oil Station, was a very popular business place. It was entirely a family store, as it was run by Mr. Waggoner, his son, George, and two daughters, Rena and Rose. There are several of the present generation who could lay claim to having been started along a musical career by Rose Waggoner, a popular music teacher of her day.

Mr. Waggoner came to Viola in 1875. During the first year he confined his time to farming and running a grist mill. His first venture in merchandising was in 1876, at which time he built the brick building that he operated for about thirty years. He later sold his business to F. M. Crosby who continued to operate it for many years.

Until 1893, when the present Grade School building was built, the educational facilities were in two white school houses built in the early sixties, both of which were located where the Viola Cemetery now is. Mrs. Dora Fishel taught school here in 1894.

Some time during the latter five years, prior to the turn of the century, Viola was incorporated as a village, with its own officers. Following are the men who were responsible for the governing of this village: President, C. F. Mathews; Trustees, J. B. Gribble, Chas. Kinder, John Anderson, J. C. Hull, C. A. Henthorn and George Guess; Clerk, George Waggoner; Assessor, A. J. McCarty; Police Justice, W. H. Miller; Constable, F. C. Rabbitt; Justices of the Peace, George Wise and R. A. Tubbs; Supervisors, N. H. Burgor and O. L. Sommars.

Yes, Viola was a thriving little village with a population of about 500 industrious citizens. The hitching posts that lined the main street on both sides, were always tied full of teams, hitched to buggies or light wagons, farmers driving for miles to bring their feed for grinding, wheat to be ground into flour, and to trade their butter and eggs for groceries and necessary clothing. The commercial travelers pronounced Viola as the best inland village in the state of Wisconsin. It was because of this reputation that the Kickapoo and Northern Railway Company began to realize it to be a good business venture to extend their line up the valley from Soldiers Grove, which did become a reality in 1897. In order to build the railroad into Viola, it was necessary to bond the townships through which the railroad would run. Consequently, the Town of Forest was bonded for \$11,000 and the Town of Liberty for \$3,500. The coming of the railroad put new life into the village. The Cushman homestead was added to the Village plot, and in five years, the village had increased nearly 100 over the previous census.



#### SPANISH WAR VETERANS

From Viola and vicinity. Standing, left to right, Clyde Danforth, Jack Loveless, Ole Olson. Seated, left to right, George Simmons, Enoch Erickson, Jim Carter, Charley Marker

Besides the dairying industry and agriculturing of the surrounding area, many other industries had sprung up, among which were the saw mills, previously mentioned. At first, the main business of the mills was to cut the logs into lumber for their immediate use, but later, after the railroad came to other parts of the state, railroad ties were sawed out and as many as 125,000 ties were handled yearly and rafted down the river. We also find that stave and heading mills, excelsior mills and hoop pole factories were built. A. J. McCarty operated a cooper shop and hoop pole factory during the late nineties, manufacturing and shipping many thousand hoops, also making and shipping a large number of barrels. Huffman Bros. operated a stave and saw mill and handled thousands of feet of lumber and made thousands of stave bolts.

There were the two roller flour mills, A. C. Cushman operated one with a capacity of 100 barrels per day and Wm. Waggoner, the other, its capacity being 35 barrels per day.

Our community shared in the anxiety of the Spanish American conflict, when seven of our native sons enlisted and left for the front in 1898. They were Enoch Erickson, Ole Olson, Clyde Danforth, Chas. Marker, George Simmons, Jim Carter and Jack Loveless. They all returned home safely when the war was over.

Thus we find our village at the close of the nineteenth century, a wide awake progressive locality, abounding in many natural resources, and populated with industrious citizens who had opened the road to greater achievements by their untiring efforts. Will the next fifty years see as great strides in progress as the past years have been? Now let us turn the page of history and see what the future has in store for us.

## CHAPTER IX

While it was possible to get only a few of the family biographies, the experiences were similar in the lives of our early settlers.

Starting out with the story of our first pioneers who braved the wilds of what is now the Town of Forest, we give the more detailed adventures of the two Bender brothers, William and Daniel.

A full century has passed since Wm. and Daniel Bender made their way through brush and virgin timber, over uncharted trails, to homestead and carve out of the wilderness, a home for their families and the generations to follow.

They were two of the first settlers who came to this part of Richland County, however, this was not their first trip to Wisconsin. In 1853, one year before their permanent journey, they came to the area around Platteville, but the country did not quite satisfy their dreams of a new home, so they went back to Indiana, and in the spring of the following year they struck out again, bringing their families with them, and at the crossing of the Wisconsin river, at Orion, they decided to leave their wives and children there while they explored further for a more favorable location. They followed the old Black River trail for a ways, then struck off across country, and finally came to a wooded valley filled with springs that made them think of the country back in Somerset County, Pennsylvania, where they had originally lived, before moving to Indiana.

They must have been overjoyed at what they found because, immediately upon arriving they began to build a home in this new found paradise. It took them about six weeks to build a crude log cabin and then, when completed, they returned to Orion for their families. Having built but the one cabin, it was necessary for both families to live together until further arrangements could be made to build more room. In the meantime, crops were planted, on the hill above the house, a crude barn was built and the place made ready for the rugged Wisconsin winter just ahead.

In September of that year, word was received by a messenger, that more of the Bender brothers and sisters, with their families, were on their way to Wisconsin from Pennsylvania.

Daniel said to his wife, "Susan, put extra food in the pot today for I am sure they will be coming in soon" and sure enough, down the trail came the long line of travelers, thirty in all, about mid-afternoon. Nothing has been said about where they all slept that night or the many nights to follow, but it is safe to say that the one room cabin must have served as shelter for at least the women and children, until more cabins could be built.

And that did happen, because later, as the new homes began to be built near the convenient springs down this little valley, it rightly became known as Bender Hollow.

And there, nestling in this little valley, a log church was built, surrounded by the homes of those early pioneers. It was called the United Brethren, because like many other traditions and ideas, it was associated with their former home in Pennsylvania. Even though the original building has long since been torn down, there are pieces of furniture now almost 100 years old, that was used in that little log church in the hollow. A crude table about 36 inches square and a mourners bench, as well as some split bottom chairs that were made by "Old Lame Henry", a brother of Daniel and Wm. These pieces of furniture were later used in the larger frame building built on the hill which was dedicated as another United Brethren church in 1889. The bell in this newer edifice was made in the foundry at Stoystown,



#### DANIEL BENDER'S HOMESTEAD

Billy and Betty Bender, Direct Descendants of Daniel Bender

Pennsylvania, by Joseph Bender, also a brother of the early pioneers. This bell was shipped to Wisconsin and placed in the tower at the time of the dedication and was still used to peal out the hour of worship when this congregation was united with the Viola E. U. B. church in 1951. There were fire shovels and tongs forged and made by the hands of Pete Bender in his blacksmith shop about one-half mile west of the church. These also are still in existence.

As the log church was replaced by a more modern frame building, so these early pioneers replaced their log cabins with homes and farm buildings built in the style of the Pennsylvania Dutch, with wide overhanging eaves and loft, on the barns and wide porches on the houses. The massive stone foundations of many of these buildings still stand as monuments to the indomitable spirit of these early forefathers.

In 1858, Daniel Bender began building the more commodious home that would replace his log cabin of one room. Because he built well, it has stood the test of time. It is perhaps old in years but the spirit of the builder lives on. Because of sickness in the family, the house was not completed until the autumn of 1859. On New Years Day of 1860, the family moved in their new home.

Its hand hewn timbers, hand made doors and windows, and wide window sills, all reflect the handiwork of master builders. All rafters, stringers and studding were hand hewn. The house for the most part, was built of basswood and butternut lumber, and is three stories high. On the first floor, the ceilings are eight feet high, on the second, ten feet. Big, spacious rooms, and one can walk directly out of the large kitchen into the cellar built back into the hill. Rafters in the attic are of poles, boards on the attic floor are 18 inches wide, sawed from virgin

timber. Daniel never heard the word "insulation" but a few years ago, his grandson, Roy Austin, while wiring the house for electricity, discovered back of the door casing, that all the shavings and saw dust from the sawing of timber, was between the studding and when that ran out, timothy hay was used to insulate for warmth.

The house was heated by a huge fireplace that burned four foot logs and all the cooking was done in this same fireplace. It also added a glow to help light the room, as the candles were the only means of illuminating the home. Outside, the cold winter winds may have howled across the snow, but inside there was warmth and good cheer, and there the Daniel Bender family dispensed their hospitality to the friends and strangers alike for many a year.

Following the death of Daniel and his fourth wife, which both occurred in 1898, their daughter and son, Betty and Billy, as they were called by everyone far and near, remained on the homestead until William passed away and following his death, Betty moved to Viola where she lived until her death.

During her lifetime, she prized and took very good care of the priceless heirlooms that belonged to her family. Among these was a table cloth, woven from flax in 1845, which had been in the family since it was made in Pennsylvania. Also two old bibles, which contain the birth, marriage and death records of the family. These bibles were also carried from Pennsylvania to Indiana and then on to Wisconsin. There were also spool beds with rope in place of slats to hold the corn husk ticks, and spinning wheels and carding machines, which are still in existence at the present time.

Not alone was the house built of sturdy timbers, but the barns, the one on the hill as well as the one down below the house, the sheds, spring house, and the indispensable smoke house, were all fashioned from hand hewn timbers. In the lower barn, which was 40x40 feet, all the stringers were hand made, fourteen of them 40 feet long, straight and as smooth as machine sawed timbers of today. The barn is still standing, although remodeled, to meet the needs of the present.

The spring house, with its continuous supply of water, which has furnished five generations an abundance of which to drink, also the foot bridge, over the small creek that is fed from this spring, still stands. On the north side of the house, stands a buckeye tree, a century old, as the seed was brought on that long journey from Indiana and planted 100 years ago, a living memorial to those who built well.

But gone are the vain and strutting pea fowls who gloriously displayed their iridescent golden and green colors to all who chanced to pass by. No where else could these proud birds be found but at the home of Billy and Betty Bender.

This story would not be complete, to stop here with the family of Daniel alone, but let us go further back into the life history of Peter and Susan Wilt Bender, father and mother of Daniel and William. They were natives of Somerset Co. Penn., born in 1791 and 1795, respectively, and were married in 1812. They had twelve sons and five daughters. Two of them died in infancy. The records show that from this large family of seventeen children, nine answered the call to colors in the Civil War. All returned safely to their homes.

In the fall of 1854, Peter Bender, his wife, and some of the brothers and sisters came to Wisconsin, namely: Samuel and wife; Elias and family; Elizabeth and six children; Jonas; Hannah and Susan. It was they who made up the party of thirty previously mentioned in this story. Emanuel, another brother, arrived in 1885 and Peter Jr., and family and Henry, in 1856. All of them settled in the town of Forest near the other two brothers.

Wm. has been mentioned as Daniel's brother and early companion. About three months after their arrival in Wisconsin, he bought 80 acres of land from the Government, a mile or so down the hollow from his brother, Dan. He paid \$1.25 per acre for his homestead and then built a set of buildings, equal in style and sturdiness to those of Daniel's. He later bought more land until he and his two sons owned over 500 acres. On July 18, 1954, the 100th anniversary of this farm was observed. Even though Wm. and Mary and their two sons, Ephriam and Henry, have passed on, the farm remains in the family and Ephriam's wife still lives in the house where no other family has ever resided. There too, are many heirlooms of yesteryear, among these are a 100 year old bed spread, hand made, and brought from their former home in the east, as well as the table on which the anniversary dinner was served.

This homestead, like the one of the other brother, whose home was presided over by a buckeye tree, has a huge pine tree as a guardian angel. Amid the large orchard of apple and cherry trees on the slope of the hill back of the farm buildings, it stands erect, a giant by comparison to other trees, its branches forming a cone of perfect symmetry that stands out in relief against its background of hill and sky. This tree's history is interesting because, when the other trees of the forest were cleared away, a tiny pine seedling was discovered and left to grow. It was perhaps about the age of the two sons of Wm. and was given special care until it grew large enough to fend for itself. It was sheltered from the cold winds by the surrounding hills and there were no nearby trees to cripple its growth so it has grown into a large tree that has withstood the ravages of time. The apple trees that were planted by man, have almost gone to their reward, but this mighty tree lives on, a giant in all its glory. How many generations will it live until some act of nature shall mar its perfect form and it too shall return to the earth from which it sprung.

On the hill above the home of Daniel is the old cemetery where these noble souls, who came and conquered the vast wilderness, were laid to rest after a life time of toil and hardship. Their memory lives on as the mighty tree that stands the test of storm and time.

#### The Kanable's

The Kanable family came to Wisconsin and settled in the Town of Forest in the fall of 1854, a few short months after the Benders located in Bender Hollow. Other families came to this land of wilderness about the same time and because the Benders were already located, they were depended on to help the rest get located and to help them build their cabins before winter set in.

Levi Kanable and his family located at the foot of Kanable Hill, about two miles from Viola. First, he purchased 160 acres from the Government, then later, added to his possessions until he had 295 acres, the greater portion of which he reclaimed from the virgin forest.

Levi and his wife were both born in Pennsylvania and were of German descent. They later moved to Clinton Co., Indiana, but the immigrating fever was still with them and they finally landed in Wisconsin. Levi's father and mother, Jacob and Magdalene Kanable, both stayed in Indiana.

The Knable family were originally members of the Lutheran church but upon moving to Wisconsin they joined the U. B. church.

Jeremiah, one of the eleven children of Levi and Barbara Kanable, witnessed the development of this section from the sylvan wilds to well cultivated fields and lands. He chose farming as his occupation early in life. He was one of the patriotic sons of the Republic who went forth from the Town of Forest to serve in the Civil War and belonged to Co.

I, the 12th Wis. Vol. Infantry. He was with General Sherman's forces on that historic march from Atlanta to the Sea.

In 1869 he married Isabel Dobson, a daughter of Robert and Martha Dobson, who emigrated from Pennsylvania in 1856. The Dobsons located in Vernon County until 1860, then moved to the Town of Forest where they resided until their deaths.

Jeremiah and Isabel Kanable had ten children, all of whom grew up and married and lived near the parental home. Mrs. Irvin Bender and Mrs. Alma Walter, of Viola, and Mrs. Roy Miller, and Brainard, of Richland Center, are the four surviving descendants of this pioneer family. The others were Mrs. Elvin Lanam, Delburn, Mrs. George Benn, Mrs. Carl Walter, Mrs. D. Rounds and Edgar.

Many of Jeremiah and Isabel Kanable's grandchildren and great-grandchildren are living in and around Viola. Others have gone far afield. One grandson, Gerald Kanable, a Major in the U. S. Air Force, was very recently transferred to Turkey. He has also spent much time in China, Japan and other outposts, in the service of his country.

Another son of Levi Kanable was John, who located on a farm at the top of Kanable Hill, on Hopewell Ridge. His descendants have also played a great part in the development of our community. One son, Code, living in Richland Center, and a daughter, Mrs. Clarence Matthes, of Viola, are survivors of this branch of the Kanable family. Tude, Owen and Minor, having passed away a few years ago.

Mrs. Flem Blakley (Martha) was a daughter of the early pioneer family. After her marriage to Mr. Blakley, they resided on the farm that her father, Levi, had homesteaded when she was but two years old. Through many hardships, she raised a family that have left a name for themselves in the making of history in this locality. Her descendants are Mrs. Dott Clift; Mrs. Mae Cowee; Floyd Blakley, of Madison; and Mrs. Bernice Austin, of Milwaukee.

In addition to the three children of Levi mentioned above, there were six other sons and daughters who located in this locality, namely: Jacob and Mike, who married daughters of Jacob Neher; Susan; Cevina; Simon, married Hannah Bender; and Frank. Two sons died in infancy.

Much more should be written concerning this pioneer family, as no doubt, there are many incidents of early life that would be of much interest to all who read this account.

#### The Tubbs

In the early part of 1860, R. A. Tubbs and wife came to the Kickapoo Valley and settled on a farm four miles north of Viola. They were originally from the state of New York, but moved to Illinois in 1853 before coming to Wisconsin seven years later.

The farm they settled on was all virgin timber and there being no buildings on the land, their first night was spent under a crude shelter made of brush and limbs. But all hands went to work and the next few days found a cabin built not far from the bank of the Kickapoo river. It was not modern in the sense that we speak of today, but it spelled home to this pioneer family. In a few years another home was built, this one on the road leading to La Farge from Viola, and directly across from the Frank Abelt farm buildings.

Mr. Tubbs was very active, both mentally and physically, and at the time of his death, when he was almost ninety years old, he had been grubbing out a tree on his farm. He had always retained an active interest in all political and religious issues and had a very keen mind and exceptional memory for one of his age.

Mr. and Mrs. Tubbs had four children, Mrs. Mary Kelley; Mrs. Windsor Clift; Mrs. Wm. Tenney and Arthur.

Mr. Tubbs died in 1905, his wife having passed away a few years prior to that time.

One of their daughters married Wm. Tenney, a foster son of Samuel Tubbs. After their marriage in 1880, William worked for his father-in-law and later, purchased the farm which became their home for 61 years. Mrs. Tenney lived on the same piece of land for 86 years.

Mr. Tenney was born in Jefferson Co., Wisconsin, in 1857. His father died before his birth. He was adopted by his uncle and aunt, Mr. and Mrs. Samuel Tubbs. Mr. Tubbs enlisted in the Union Army and moved his family to Washington, D. C., where the family lived a few rods from the army camp. William soon became a favorite of the soldiers who made wooden guns for him and his foster brother. When the soldiers went out for drill, the boys went too. One day the soldiers were lined up for inspection. The officer came down the line and smiled when he saw the two boys standing at attention. Then in no uncertain terms, he told the company that the boys rated a much better inspection than they did.

A very memorable incident happened when he was in Washington. He and his foster mother attended the Ford Theatre where the President of the United States, Abraham Lincoln, and his party were, on the evening of April 14, 1865, to celebrate the end of the Civil War. He saw John Wilkes Booth run on the stage and shoot Mr. Lincoln. He said the crowd went after Mr. Booth but the latter made his escape on horse back, in spite of the fact that he broke his ankle in jumping from the stage. Booth was trailed to a barn and driven from his hiding place by an infuriated mob when they set fire to the building. He was then shot when he attempted to escape.

After the war, the family moved to Wisconsin. Later, when he grew older, he went to Iowa and the Dakotas, and drove horses for a livery stable. He told of one harrowing experience in which he nearly lost his life when caught on the prairie in a blinding blizzard. He finally reached shelter, but not before his hands and feet were frozen.

He came back to Wisconsin and after his marriage which lasted the phenominal period of over 67 years, he spent the remainder of his life on the farm at which place he died on June 26, 1946, at the age of 88 yrs. He and his wife, Clara, had one daughter, Jennie Taylor, who now resides in Viola. His wife lived to be 90 years old and passed away in 1950.

Arthur Tubbs, son of R. A. Tubbs, grew up in the parental home but left to make his home elsewhere. He later came back to Viola and resided here until his death.

Mrs. Windsor Clift, another daughter of the Tubbs family, spent her entire life in this area. The history of her life is not available at this time but may be included in the Clift biography at a later time.

#### The Slabacks

This is a story of Indian days as recalled by a former Viola school janitor, the late Albert Slaback, father of Mrs. H. L. Henthorn. This article is a reprint from some paper, probably the La Crosse Tribune.

Tales of Indian raids on the Kentucky fort in which his ancestors had taken refuge, were told to Mr. Slaback when a child. He heard the account of his plucky grandmother who poured the molten lead into a hinged iron mold to form bullets to fight the redskins, and of his maternal grandfather, Peters, who made the acquaintance of Abraham Lincoln while plying flat boats on the Ohio river.

The pioneering Slaback family migrated to Indiana when it was still a part of the Northwest Territory. On December 27, 1858, Albert was born near Mulberry, Indiana. Two years later he came with his parents, William and Laurinda, to Wisconsin, settling about ten miles

from Viola, near West Lima. His father enlisted in the Union Army, and an aunt came from Indiana to help the mother care for the two children during his absence.

Their farm was ridge land, with no springs, and water had to be hauled in barrels by ox teams. In winter they used melted snow. His mother saved enough money from the compensation granted to wartime wives to buy a span of colts, which was their first team of horses. They proudly hitched them to a pin sled.

His first school teacher was Sarah Jane Mullendore. They sat on benches made of split basswood logs, and on a ledge in the front of the room reposed a "lash", which also served a purpose.

After the close of the war, they traded for a farm on Goose Creek, where they were often visited by Indians begging for food and who seemed to have a special fondness for Mrs. Slaback's "johnny cake". Their log house had a wide hearth stone fireplace, built with clay mortar.

Albert was married to Alice Clift August 25, 1882. The ceremony was performed by Justice of the Peace, Richard Tubbs. The bride was a daughter of Laal Clift who settled in Forest Township in 1854, a year before Viola was founded. Mr. Slaback, after farming for some years, was janitor in the Viola schools for 23 years, retiring in 1934.

#### The Laal Clift Family

One warm summer day in June, 1854, a company of people comprised of Laal Clift, wife and five children; Wm. Clift, a brother; and two other men Jackson and Palmer, by name, stopped at the William and Daniel Bender log cabin on their way to their new home in the Wisconsin wilderness. They spent the night with their friends, the Benders, and the next day they started out for Kickapoo Center, cutting their way through the brush along what is now known as Hopewell Ridge and thence down a valley that led to the Kickapoo River and after three days of travel, they finally reached Wilson's tavern or hotel.

They stopped there a few days but as they were anxious to get located, the men folks worked their way up the river. Somewhere they met H. L. Turner who hired Laal Clift and Lyman Jackson to build a house for him where he had cleared a piece of land near where the Jack Loveless home now stands. In 1856 H. L. Turner built a saw mill and the next year, a grist mill, at this place.

Laal Clift had very little experience in building a house, and had anything but a mechanical eye so he tried plumbing a door with a scoring chip tied to a piece of basswood large enough to bind a load of hay. Mr. Clift and family lived in this house that summer and raised a crop of potatoes and other vegetables for their winter's use. In the meantime, the men folks looked around for a permanent location, and finally settled on what is now known as the Blaine Blakley farm.

The Clifts were natives of New York state but spent four years in or near Elgin, Illinois. It took them six weeks to come to Wisconsin from Illinois, as it was slow traveling by ox team. They had two teams, hitched to wooden wheel wagons, carrying all their belongings on a hay rack. They led a cow and heifer behind, which furnished them with milk as they traveled along. Some time later the heifer met an accidental death by a tree falling on her, but they were fortunate to salvage her for meat. They chose the mouth of Goose Creek for their future home because of its resemblance to their home state of New York.

There were many Indians in the forest in those days and their encampment was across the river on what is now known as the William Tenney farm. On one occasion ten stalwart Indians came to call on Mrs. Clift when the men folks were away at work. Her enjoyment over their visit was not increased by what she had previously heard of the atrocious

way they had of abducting children and scalping their victims. However, they did her no harm. All they wanted was to sample her corn bread which she was famous for making.

The woods were infested with wolves, bears, lynx, wildcats, deer, and other smaller game animals, so there was plenty of sport for hunters as well as wild game for food. The Kickapoo River and smaller streams were full of fish, so their meat was augmented by plenty of trout and other game fish.

These early pioneers gathered and sold ginseng; trapped for furs; logged timber for slippery elm bark and lumber, for cash, to buy their few needs. Flax and wool were used to make clothing. They made maple syrup and sugar, raised corn, potatoes and other vegetables, also gathered wild fruits to supplement their meager diet. They made their own butter and Mrs. Clift called hers "brindle butter", because the wind blew so much dust through the cracks between the logs of their cabin and into the cream before it was churned that the butter resembled a brindle cow.

Six children were born to this family after they came to Wisconsin. Two died while very young, leaving ten children to feed and clothe and it kept the mother busy every minute of the day. But not was drudgery because these pioneer folks had a way of doing things together. They met at each others homes for an afternoon of knitting and darning and evenings were often spent by whole families getting together for husking and quilting bees. Years later, on some occasions, Mrs. Clift would repeat the following poem: "The New Country", written by Helen Jackson.

The wilderness was our abode some sixty years ago,  
And when good meat we wished to eat,  
We caught the buck or doe.  
Of deer skins, we made moccasins to wear upon our feet,  
The checkered shirt was thought no hurt,  
Good company to keep.  
Our houses, too, were logs of wood  
Rolled up in squares and caulked with mud,  
If the bark was tight, the roof was good,  
For a new country.  
We cleared our land for rye and wheat,  
For strangers, and ourselves, to eat,  
And from the maple, drew our sweet,  
In this new country.  
The Indians sometimes made us fear,  
The dangers that were nigh,  
The shaggy bear was oft times where  
The pig was in the sty.  
The rattle snake, which children dread,  
The fearful mother oft times said,  
Some beast of prey will take my babe,  
In this new country.  
For fish, we used the hook and line,  
We pounded corn to make it fine.  
On johnny cake, our ladies dined,  
In this new country.  
And when a visit we did pay,  
On a winter's night, or a winter's day,  
Our oxen drew our ladies' sleigh,  
In this new country.  
We lived in social harmony,  
And drank the purling stream,  
No doctor, priest or lawyer there  
Was seldom ever seen.

The older children went to the first school ever held in the Village of Viola, with Helen Jackson as teacher. Windsor, the oldest son, was on his way home from school one day when he met up with a large bear. Needless to say, he did not loiter along the way but made record time reaching home. The younger children later went to Tunnelville to a school taught by Bert Southworth's mother.

When the war of the states broke out, Laal enlisted and was stationed at Fort Leavenworth. He became ill and was sent home to regain his health. Later, he was drafted and spent more time in the army. After he returned home, he continued farming, but over a period of a few years, he carried mail between Viola and Ontario.

On one trip to Ontario he brought back a pair of "store bought" boots with red tops for Charley, one of the younger children. How thrilled the boy was with his first pair of boots. Mr. Mockett was the shoe man in that neighborhood and made crude shoes for the families thereabouts. Later his grandson, Algon, a cripple, learned the trade and their shoe shop was across the road from the Tunnelville school.

Laal's brother, Wm., who was his companion when they first came to Wisconsin, was not satisfied with the location, so he moved on to Minnesota, where he remained the rest of his life.

Windsor, the oldest son, enlisted in the Civil War, as did his father. He was eighteen at the time and was on the march with Sherman to the sea. He returned home safely at the close of the war. Later he married Cena Tubbs, a daughter of R. A. Tubbs, and a sister of Mrs. Tenney. Before her marriage, Cena taught school at West Lima and walked home over the week ends.

Mrs. Tom Hill, better known to all her friends as Hattie, is 88 years young and is one of the younger children of this large family. She is making her home with her daughter, Mrs. Alice Savacool, and is able to help with the housework and enjoys knitting mittens and socks for members of the family in her spare time.

Tom Hill, in the early 90's, made his home for a short time with his uncle, Johnny Jones, after he came from England. Later, he came to work for Windsor Clift on the farm where the Savacools now live. There he met his future wife, Hattie Clift, and they were married on April 20, 1890. They built a plank house across the road on the hillside above the home of her father, Laal. They lived there a number of years and finally moved to the farm across the valley, occupied by Ernest Hill. Later they acquired the farm that is now owned by Clem Adams. Mrs. Hill has since made her home with her daughter.

One son also remains of this pioneer family, Claren, who with his wife, now resides in Vola. After his marriage to Edna Warner, Oct. 9, 1897, he bought the Ernest Hill farm and they lived there nine years. Two daughters were born to this family, Mrs. Beatrice Hurless, of Richland Center, and Florence, Mrs. Jack Downer, of Milwaukee.

Later, Mr. Clift was associated in the hardware business in Viola with Mr. Shoups for several years. He also owned and lived on a farm south of town. In recent years he came to Viola to make his home in the house formerly owned by Mrs. Windsor Clift, his brother's widow.

The other children of the Laal Clift family helped in different ways in the making of early history, but without sufficient material, it is not possible to make this record complete at this time.

#### The Jake Reed Family

Another pioneer recalled some early experiences among the Indians. This is the story of Jake Reed, father of Agnes Reed, who now lives in Viola. Mr. Reed came to Wisconsin by covered wagon from

Ohio, where he was born. Jake's father, David Reed, came of a wealthy family, but except for a small fortune which he had accumulated himself, he brought none of it with him, his father having disinherited him for leaving his home to come to a wilderness filled with Indians.

Their covered wagon was drawn by four horses, two of which they sold for \$700.00 after they came here. After arriving at Reads-town which was as far as the trail went, Jake's father cut a road through the forest for eight miles up the west fork of the Kickapoo, that they might reach their land by wagon. Here they built their home with Indians as near neighbors.

An Indian village was located on their farm, and contained 150 wigwams, in which three or four hundred Indians lived. They were extremely fond of smoked ham and Jake's mother was so afraid of them she usually gave them whatever they asked for. Finally their chief, Big Hen, forbade his tribe to ask for things again.

Jake and his father, David, hauled goods by team from La Crosse to Viroqua before there was a railroad in Viroqua. From their own farm, they hauled dressed pork and wheat to La Crosse. Jake also drove the stage coach which carried passengers and mail from Soldiers Grove to Viola before the railroad reached Viola. He was also a keeper of bees and sold much honey in his life time.

#### The Matthes Family

On September 10, 1861, Andrew and Elizabeth Matthes, with their family, left Russeville, Indiana, by wagon, drawn by a team of horses, for Wisconsin, by way of Chicago, which at that time was open prairie and swamps. When they arrived at the Wisconsin River, near Lone Rock, they were ferryed across and from there they continued their long journey, arriving at their home in the wilderness not long before winter set in. They had previously bought this farm of 120 acres for \$600.00 without having seen it. It is now owned by a grandson, Dewey, and in a short time it will have been in the Matthes family 100 years.

It was a very severe winter following their arrival and with no advance preparation of food to carry them through until spring, they had many hardships. The one lone cow that had made the journey with them had to browse on basswood sprouts to keep alive until grass grew.

They found a small cabin to move into until they could build one on their farm. The one they built had only one room and was made of logs, daubed with straw and mud, with no floor and a bear skin for the door, because winter set in so soon after their arrival they had no time to finish it. Later they put in a loft with pegs on the side wall to use as a ladder.

The roof was made of shakes (two foot hand made shingles) nailed to pole rafters. This type of roofing was by no means waterproof and many times the boys, who used the loft for a sleeping room, found snow on their beds when they awoke in the morning.

The next spring and summer were spent in getting land cleared and some grain planted. Mr. Matthes was a doctor by profession and was not accustomed to the hard work of a pioneer. He became ill and died the following winter, leaving his wife with seven small children, under the age of 12 years, to clothe and feed.

The Civil War had just broken out and all the able bodied men in the community were called into service. No help was available the next spring to put in a crop. Wages were high for what could be had, and money being so scarce, Mrs. Matthes and her boys managed to plant a few potatoes and some corn around the stumps in their little clearing.

And so it was with determination and hard work that this mother and her growing sons made a living from year to year. They acquired

a few sheep, the wool from which, was taken to a carding machine a few miles from home. This was made into wool rolls which later would be spun into yarn. Then the mother, with her loom, would weave stockings from the yarn for the entire family.

Their food was mostly potatoes and corn bread made from ground corn. Later, what meat was had, was mostly pork and wild game. The pigs that were raised were marked in the ear and turned loose to forage for their own food, which was mostly acorns. In the fall the neighbors would have a round-up and claim their hogs by the ear marks which had been registered.

Wintergreen leaves were steeped for tea and wheat kernels were browned and ground, which took the place of coffee.

In the spring the family tapped the maple trees and made their year's supply of sugar. Mrs. Matthes would walk and carry the surplus of sugar six miles to a store at the head of Camp Creek, run by a Mr. Clark, to buy other necessary food. The boys also dug ginseng for their spending money. There was a large amount of it in the woods in those days. Usually rainy days were chosen to dig the roots, the good days were spent doing other work. The boys received ten cents a pound for the roots, which was a fortune to those early settlers as there was no other sources of cash in those days.

A neighbor, Johnny Gribble, was a shoe maker. He lived about a mile from the Matthes family. Mr. Gribble would take measurements of the feet and make boots from cow hide. It took a lot of cow hide to make shoes for seven pairs of feet. You may guess that shoes were worn only in the coldest part of the year.

Mrs. Matthes not only fed and clothed her family, but many times shared her meager supply with the Indians that came by, begging for food. The Winnebagoes often passed near their home and descendants of Black Hawk, their former chief, called on them. Mrs. Matthes gave them flour, sugar and other articles to take back to their families when they were in need of food.

In 1875 the Matthes' built a frame house of two stories. One of the neighbors helped the boys with carpenter work.

Soon afterward, the mother, being of the Latter Day Saints belief, decided to take her family to Utah where the large Mormon Temple was being built at that time. They rented their farm to a neighbor for three years and drove to Richlnd Center where they took the train for Lone Rock. It was a narrow guage railroad with wooden rails and they rode in box cars with common chairs to sit on. From Lone Rock, they boarded a train for Chicago, and then westward over the Union Pacific to York, Montana, which was as far as the railroad went at that time. The trip was continued from there by freight wagons, a distance of 100 miles. The boys walked and the mother and two daughters rode. They had narrow escapes from the Sioux Indians, who were then on the war path, and about that time had massacred Custer's whole army.

Upon arrival at Salt Lake City, the boys found work at various jobs. But conditions were not of the best and many things were not as the mother had hoped for, so at the end of one year, they started back for Wisconsin to the farm they had left. Their money ran low so some of the boys had to work their way home. It was harvest time in the wheat fields of Iowa, and each time they hired out to a different farmer, they were a few miles nearer home.

In the meantime, Mother Matthes with the two girls, and the younger boys arrived home, and having rented their farm for three years, they had no place to live. George, the youngest son, hired out to Daniel Bender for the harvest season and the others moved into a vacant house until they could get possession of their farm.

One by one, the family married and found homes for themselves. Edward married Lena Fishel; Sarah became Mrs. Bert Sergent; Charles married Alice Lepley; James married a school teacher, Lucy Smith; George married Ada Burt; and Emily became Mrs. Henry Hurless.

Charles will be better known as C. F. Mathews, proprietor of the drug store now owned by Gordon Wheeler. His wife had the only millinery shop in Viola for many years.

James ran the home farm and combined it with livestock buying for his life time work.

The two daughters moved from this locality and their families grew up in other parts of the country.

The family of George Matthews have homes in the state of Missouri and Ed Matthes raised his family in the locality of Viola.

The hardships of this pioneer family is very similar to those of other trail blazers, but the fact that the details of this story were recorded by Elizabeth Matthes gives us a better insight into the ways our ancestors lived who came to open up this country to civilization. The autobiography of Grandmother Matthes, which was written about 75 years ago, is kept in the original script and is yellow with age.

#### The Lawton Family

Melissa Southworth Lawton, a pioneer mother, came to Kickapoo Center shortly after her marriage to Isaac R. Lawton in 1855. They later filed on the present Lawton homestead. They moved in with Van S. Bennett and wife who lived on the adjoining farm to the south, in the fall of 1855. They remained there that winter and in March, Mr. Lawton with Mr. Bennett's help, erected a log house near where the present home is located. It was quite a house and consisted of two rooms with several windows and boasted of a floor of sawed lumber.

As the community became more settled, much of the social activities were held in the Lawton cabin. Mrs. Lawton taught school in her home while a school house was being built. The neighbors used to gather in her home for spelling bees also.

Aunt Melissa spun the family clothing from flax and also spun wool into yarn for making their socks, mittens, caps, etc.

She said it seemed like going to the end of the earth when they came to the Kickapoo, but when more settlers came, they were soon friends, all on a common plane, suffering the same hardships, and enjoying the simple pleasures. She kept a diary for almost forty years and often mentioned that "We pioneers were more sociable than folks of today, no worrying, borrowing, stealing, scheming, envying, jealousy, and yearning to get the thousand and one things that money can buy".

When her husband enlisted in the Civil War, she was left with three small children to feed and clothe. Due to exposure on the battle front her husband became hospitalized and she was notified that his leg would have to be amputated. She wrote the hospital asking them to send him home to her instead of operating. He arrived so poor that she hardly recognized him but she did not lose hope. She took care of him day and night and with the advice of Indians, she saved his life and limb.

She lived on the Lawton homestead nearly 74 years, enjoying good health, until she was past 90 when she fell and broke her hip. She recovered sufficiently to do many things for herself and lived to the ripe old age of 98 years. Her husband preceded her in death nearly 26 years.

She left a son Waldon, and a daughter, Mrs. Huffman. Her son operated the Lawton homestead until his death, then the farm passed into the hands of her grandson, Ray.

The Lawton family has been prominent in the dairy industry and

are noted for their fine herd of Holstein cattle. J. W. Lawton introduced them to his already modern method of farming and his son and grandson Harold, have improved them down through the years. They also were interested in the apiary business, having as high as 70 swarms of bees at a time and extracting over 7,000 pounds of honey in a year. In late years, through the efforts of Ray and his son, Harold, they have gone into the hybrid corn business and made a name for themselves in the curing and marketing of hybrid seed corn.

Their success in all their fields of enterprise is due, no doubt, to the indomitable will, thrift, and perseverance they inherited from their pioneering grandmother, who left no obstacle stand in her way when there was a job to be done.

The following is a poem taken from Aunt Melissa Lawton's diary under date of January 31, 1912.

The thing that goes the farthest  
Toward making life worth while,  
That costs the least and does the most,  
Is just a pleasant smile.  
The smile that bubbles from the heart  
That loves its fellowmen  
Will drive away the clouds of gloom  
And coax the sun again.  
It's full of worth and goodness, too,  
With manly kindness bent,  
It's worth a million dollars  
And doesn't cost a cent.  
This life is what we make it,  
A thing of smiles or tears,  
And when the loving angels  
Write the record of our years,  
God grant they read the good with smiles  
And blot the bad with tears.

#### Uncle Tommy Edwards (Centenarian)

When a man lives to the biblical age of three score years and ten, the event is usually observed in some way. When the one hundred and fifth birthday rolls around, it really calls for something special in the way of a celebration. And that really did take place on Uncle Tommy Edwards' record breaking birthday. There were 735 people present on that eventful day, February 16, 1921. Uncle Tommy made his home with his son, Joseph, on his farm, in the town of Forest and here the observance took place. People came from all over the county to wish this venerable old man many returns of the day. Even at this advanced age, he maintained that he was still a young man and took great pride in his ability to care for himself. He enjoyed relating many stories of his army life during the Civil War. He was 45 years old when he volunteered in May, 1861. He was commissioned a 2nd Lieutenant in 1863 for gallant and meritorious conduct at the storming and capture of Mayre's Heights. Another favorite story of his was the acquaintance he enjoyed with the noted frontiersman and hero, Daniel Boone. The Edwards family lived neighbor to the Boone family. In fact, the two men built their cabins not far apart. So it was not strange that Uncle Tommy, as a child, spent many hours listening to talks as told by the great character, Daniel Boone.

Death came to Mr. Edwards in October of the same year he observed his 105th birthday. During the span of Uncle Tommy's life he had seen wonderful progress in civilization. In travel, he had seen the change from the lonely pedestrian and the cumbersome stage coach,

to the railroad pullman coach, the horselss carriage, the subway and elevated transit lines, the submarine, and navigation of the air. He had seen the transformation of crude agricultural implements of a century ago, to modern machinery of today that accomplishes the work of scores of men. In his time has come the telegraph, sewing machine, electricity, telephones, moving pictures, and thousands of other things in art and science. Had Uncle Tommy lived to the present era, the strides that modern invention has made in the past twenty-five years would amaze him. We of the present generation, take these wonderful advantages too much for granted, but they are the product of the pioneers who laid the foundation during the past century.

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## CHAPTER X

### Viola of the Early 1900—1910

Old Dame Fortune really smiled on our little village of Viola during the first part of the 20th century. New businesses and modern buildings sprung up like mushrooms and more than twenty-five new homes were built in the first ten years of 1900. Much credit should be given to the railroad that came through our valley and to our town in 1897, the real boost came because there were wide-awake enterprising business men who had a firm belief in the resources and possibilities that lie right here, just waiting to be developed.

The first venture of great consequence was when several of our citizens formed a company and built the Excelsior Mill in 1901. These men saw the natural advantages of our village, being surrounded by heavily timbered hills and valleys. There was much soft wood as well as hard wood and the opening of the Excelsior Mill made a ready market for basswood timber. This plant not only furnished work for fifteen to twenty men but was a boon to the farmers who were now able to cash in on their valuable resources. During the winter months the farmers were busy cutting their basswood timber into what was called excelsior bolts and hauling them to town with sleds and team.

The plant cost about \$6,000.00 to build and was operated by a 125 horse power steam boiler and also a 75 horse powered engine. The daily capacity of the plant was about one car load of manufactured excelsior per day. The mill was well located near the railroad tracks in the west part of town. It had its own electric light plant and also furnished the tobacco warehouse with lights, which was later built. C. J. Danforth was elected to be the first manager of the mill and was later succeeded by A. J. McCarty.

The finished product of this factory was used for upholstering and packing furniture, packing china and glassware and at the close of the World's Fair at St. Louis in 1904, fifteen car loads of excelsior were shipped from this factory and used for packing purposes and eventually was distributed to all parts of the world.

Our far sighted citizens did not stop at one venture. Before the excelsior mill was hardly ready for business, they launched out into further enterprises. This time, seeing a need for a local market for the abundant tobacco crop and for storing facilities, as well as the employment it would give at the time of stripping and sorting, another company was incorporated under Wisconsin laws in July, 1901, which became known as the Viola Warehouse Company. The members of the first Board of Directors were as follows: N. H. Burgor, Pres.; Geo. Waggoner, Sec.; J. C. Hull, Treas.; E. R. Cushman and Chas. Mauleck, Vice Pres.

The actual work on the warehouse began in Sept., 1901 and was completed in December of the same year at a cost of \$6,000.00 and was

formally dedicated June 11, 1902. It had 14,400 sq. ft. of floor room, and furnished with an elevator. The basement was a sorting room and the other two floors were used for packing and storing. The first season there were 80 sorters with a weekly pay roll of \$500.00. The total amount of tobacco handled was 500 acres, valued at \$70,000.00.

The United Cigar Mfg. Co. leased the warehouse for over 5 years with John Boland and later, Arthur Shannon, as managers. Some years later, Bekedahl leased the building and used it for sorting and packing.

It was in 1903 that J. B. Kinder built the Shamrock Opera building at a cost of \$10,000.00. It was a very modern structure with steam heat, and water piped to all parts of the building from a storage tank supplied with water from a flowing well at his home.

One half of the first floor was used as a store, occupied by different firms, dealing in clothing for men. The east half was used as a tavern for a few years, then later as post office and printing office for a period of time.

In 1905 Mr. Kinder fitted the basement for a barber shop operated by Mr. Olson and in 1908, N. O. Wheeler bought out Mr. Olson and put in more modern equipment with both hot and cold water.

The upper floor of the building was used as an entertainment hall, and Mr. Kinder spared no expense in making it the best equipped of its kind in any town of our size. It had a gas lighting system and an excellent hard wood floor. The seating capacity was 600 and public speakers and show people rated it the best in the valley. The hall was initiated Jan. 11, 1904 with a dance and music by Hacketts Orchestra of Baraboo.

The Austin Brothers, Bert and Roy, started their career in the blacksmithing and wagon making line in a small building on the eastern outskirts of the village in 1898. The following year they moved into the village proper, when they built the building that later was enlarged into the present Thiede creamery. A few years later they sold it to John Warner and Chas. Kinder, who remodeled it into Viola's first butter factory. In 1905 the brothers built a shop next door to the creamery and continued in the blacksmithing and wagon making business. They went to the state of Oregon in 1910 and spent two or three years and after returning to Viola, their home town, both brothers went into the carpentry business and many homes in our village testify to their ability as carpenters of great skill. Viola, at one time, was fortunate in having a number of carpenters, and well it was too, in order to furnish labor for the building boom that our village had during the first 25 years of the century. Among these were the following men to whom the credit should go who built the most of the present buildings that now make up our town: Fred Clift, George Huffman, Frank, Bert and Roy Austin, Sam Morrow, Jay and Carl Walter, and Louis Shookman.

In October, 1905, a new bank was organized to be known as the State Bank of Viola. Its temporary quarters were in the Sloulin building. About twenty farmers and merchants were stock holders and the first officers were as follows: President C. R. Thompson; Directors, E. B. Bender, J. W. Burns, H. J. Clark; and Cashier, H. J. Clark.

Two new churches were built in our town, the Congregational, which was dedicated in 1904 and the Christian, in Mound Park in 1905.

Two more corporations were organized in Viola in 1905. The first being a creamery with 150 shares of capital stock and Wm. Waggoner as manager, and Ore Grim as buttermaker. The factory started out with a capacity of 18,000 pounds of milk daily. The other corporation was organized with Viola as headquarters for the purpose of dealing in lumber with a \$50,000. capital stock. The incorporators were John Nuzum, I. F. Nuzum, and David Hunter. The company was known as the Nuzum-

Hunter Lumber Co. with yards at Soldiers Grove, Readstown, Viola and La Farge.

One more corporation was founded in September, 1906. This company was organized with a capital stock of \$1,000 and was known as the Viola Harness Shop. It opened for business in the Odd Fellow building with J. M. Stokes as harnessmaker. The following officers were elected: President, S. W. Looker; Vice President, F. H. Morris; Secretary, J. A. Loveless, Jr.; and Treasurer, J. M. Stokes.

The Bank of Viola built a new building of red brick, two stories high, and moved in the first of January, 1906. The upper floor was occupied by Dr. Griswold and the first floor consisting of lobby, waiting room, cashier apartment, vault and private room, was occupied by the bank itself. At this time, Sam Gore was cashier, until his death in 1912 or 1913. The building is now owned and occupied by John Curtis.

In 1907 a corporation was formed by a group of business men to run a feed store. This was opened up in the Burgor bank building with C. H. Riley as manager. Later Mr. Riley bought the store and operated it until 1910 when he sold out to H. O. Wheeler.

Another company was formed early in 1906, known as the Viola Publishing Co., incorporated under the Laws of Wisconsin. The stockholders were farmers and business men of this locality. The company purchased the plant of the Readstown Herald and moved it to Viola, publishing a weekly called the Wisconsin Leaf Tobacco News, edited and managed by Geo. E. Sanford, a former principal of our schools. In the fall of this year, W. B. Van Winter was hired as a printer, to look after the mechanical end of publishing a newspaper. After a few months the name of the paper was changed to The Viola News. With two newspapers in a town of this size, neither one was making much of a success. So, in 1911, Mr. Van Winter purchased both papers and consolidated them under the name of The Viola News and he continued as editor and publisher until 1948, when he sold to Jack Vermeul, and retired from business life. Mr. Vermeul continued the paper until July, 1951 when he sold to the present editor, Floyd Griffin, who was employed in this office several years.

In 1906 concrete walks began to replace the old wooden walks and gradually the streets took on a more modern appearance. The water reservoir was built on Mt. Sheldon in 1907 and the sewage system and water lines were laid in the same year. The pumping station was built on the county line and the jail and voting booths were housed there.

In 1908 the Viola Volunteer Fire Department was organized with the following men as members: Chief, Bert Austin; Assistant Chief, V. B. Mathews; Captain, D. M. Cranston; Assistant Captain, C. L. Danforth; Foreman of Hook and Ladder Co., Burnham Scott; Foreman of Bucket Brigade, C. H. Riley; Hydrant Men, J. M. Sandmire and Lester Henthorn; Nozzlemen, Jay Walter, C. H. Keehner, Roy Austin and Ed Lawrence; other members Fred Baldwin, Ed Martin, Wes Fishel, Omer Benn, Alex Guist, Owen Kanable, Wm. Gerlach, Harley Henthorn, Bliss Hull, Harry Grear, Chas Dray, George Wheeler, S. A. Thomas, A. J. Anderson and E. R. Cushman.

It was in 1908 that the Women's Christian Temperance Union was organized and they paraded on the streets on election day, with forty or more school children carrying banners. A referendum on selling liquor came up and the town was voted dry that year, 122 to 41.

Viola had a major small pox scare in 1907. There were enough cases to warrant establishing a "Pest House". This was the house now occupied by Wm. Hill, Sr. and James Sandmire was the nurse who took care of all the patients. It was his son who brought the disease to this



#### VIOLA HIGH AND GRADED SCHOOLS

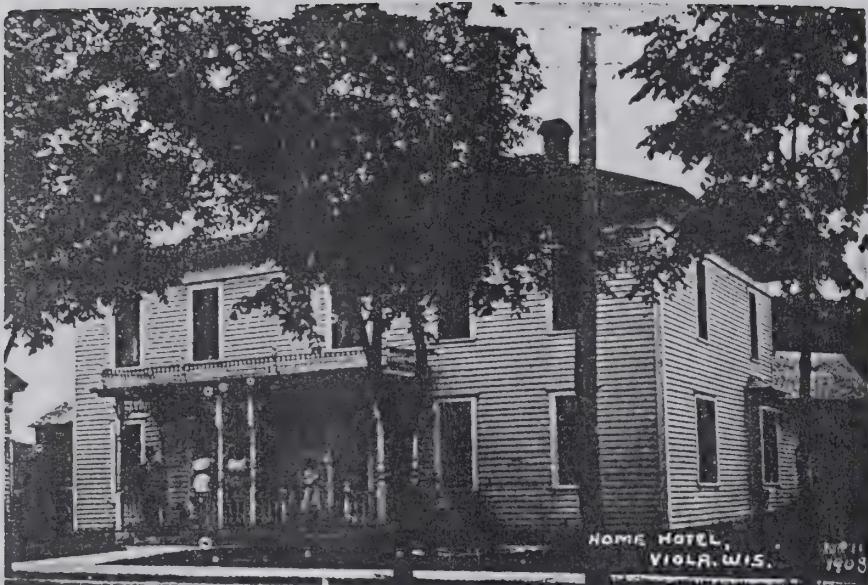
area and while he took care of his own son, he cared for the others while in quarantine.

Much excitement was caused in this area in 1907 by the discovery of traces of copper and iron in different parts of Sylvan, Bloom and Forest Townships. After options were secured and some drilling done, it was found that there was not enough ore to make it worth while and work was discontinued and the excitement died down.

During the ten years following the turn of the century, several landmarks were either torn down or moved to other locations to make way for progress. One of these was the old Viola House, later known as the Brunswick Hotel. It was moved from its old foundation to the vacant lot west of the residence that was formerly owned by J. B. Kinder. It was fitted up as a residence property and later bought and occupied by Ed Hill and his mother. Since his death, his niece and husband, Mr. and Mrs. James Renick, occupy it.

A fine large cement block building was built by Otis Barclay on the former ground of the Brunswick Hotel and occupied by the Mercantile firm of Danforth, Keehner & Edge. It was completed in 1909. This firm did not continue much over a year, for in 1910, their stock of goods was sold to R. M. Ericson, of Racine. This new man made Viola his home until his death many years later. He and his sister, Mrs. Lenna Hebard, were a progressive business firm for more than twenty-five years.

Our village made a great step forward when a new High School building was erected in 1909. It was considered modern in every detail. Our athletes began to make their competition felt, not only among the valley schools but in other areas. The track team won the Valley meet held at Gays Mills in 1910 with 53½ points. The nearest competitor had but 26 points. The two star athletes were Virgil Dowell with three firsts and Ivan Swancutt with two firsts. The latter was drawn from the meet to save him for the Declamatory contest to be held that evening. He won first with his oration. This was the fourth year that Viola had participated in this event, and they won three out of four



#### HOME HOTEL—1903

times. In 1907, Herman Anderson won first, Lee Griffin in 1908, and Ivan Swancutt in 1910. Ivan also won second place at Platteville in the regional contest.

Many new business firms came to Viola the first years of 1900 and there was much trading and dealing done. In 1905 the business directory included the following men and their respective firms: C. J. Danforth & Co., General Merchandise, Mound Park Store; S. L. Clements, Meats and Groceries; E. O. Sloulin, Photographer, Sloulin Building; B. B. Ambrose, Dray Line, bought of J. B. Gribble; Chris Anderson; Nuzum-Hunter Lbr. Co., Lumber Yard; West Fishel, Barber; N. H. Burgor, Druggist; Schauer Bros., Hardware, Machinery, Undertaking; W. D. Maeby, Restaurant and Confectionery; Cooperative Creamery, Wm. J. Waggoner, Manager; Stoll & Groves, Men's Clothing, J. B. Kinder Bldg.; C. F. Mathews, Druggist; Wm. Waggoner, General Merchandise; Mrs. C. F. Mathews, Millinery; L. L. Lathrop, Station Agent; Dr. Dake, Physician; Dr. Stormont, Physician; Dr. C. H. Nye, Dentist; Selle Excelsior Co., Excelsior; Austin Bros., Work Shop; A. J. Anderson, General Store; H. D. Kellogg, Blacksmith and Wagon Maker; W. P. Shilling, Well Driller; J. C. Hull & Son, Stock Buyers; J. H. and Gertrude Frazier, Newspaper; Commercial House, Geo. Gerlach; Home Hotel, A. W. Guess.

In the next five years several changes took place and the directory included new names and read as follows:

D. H. Shepherd, Blacksmith; Selle Excelsior Co., Excelsior, S. A. Simmons, Manager; Barclay, Clift & Shoup, Hardware; C. F. Mathews & Son, Druggists; C. F. Kellogg, Restaurant; Wes Fishel, Barber; George Rabbitt, Dray Line; N. O. Wheeler, Barber; Eber Long, Livery Stable; Chris Anderson & Son, Novelty Restaurant; Henthorn Bros., Furniture and Undertaking; Nuzum Lumber Co., Lumber Yard; Martin Brothers,

December of 1913, their efforts were crowned with success and the dam became permanent until 1952 when it was removed because it was no longer needed for electric power. The R. E. A. brought their lines into Viola and furnished power cheaper than it could be generated here. Its removal also eliminated flood hazards to the village.

C. R. Thompson, who originally built the plant, sold it to H. R. Wagner and C. E. Grear in 1915. They continued to operate the plant for six years when Mr. Grear bought out Mr. Wagner and operated and managed it alone. Much credit is due Mr. Grear for the early pioneering in the electrical advantages that our village has enjoyed.

First, he insured Viola adequate light and power use of electricity on a twenty-four hour basis; second, he safe guarded the town through a double unit water pumping system; third, he secured a volume of load through the Sylvan high line which permitted the installation of a modern power plant with double units of production against emergency.

In 1929, Grear sold his plant to Paul Kerfoot & Co., of St. Paul, and for the next few years it changed hands different times, until the village bought it of Central Utilities in 1942, to be operated as a Municipal Plant, under the management of C. E. Grear and supervision of the Village Council. In 1947, a 600 h. p. diesel engine was purchased and installed as a standby for the plant. This was large enough to carry a full load, if necessary, in time of emergency. A building was erected to house this machinery across the street from the Methodist Church.

Early in 1948, the village, which previously had used some power from the dam and large engines at La Farge, along with some water power from our dam, discontinued using electric power from La Farge and bought their current from the R. E. A. This was a very economical move on the part of Viola as the R. E. A. could furnish electricity much cheaper than it could be produced here at our plant.

The improving of our streets began early in 1912 when the Telephone Company decided to put all their wires in a cable and bury them under ground on Main and Commercial streets.

In 1916, eighteen inches of dirt was removed from Commercial St. and it was cemented between the Vernon Co. line to the C. F. Mathews corner. This made such a decided improvement that the village voted to raise enough money to complete the job to the east end of the village the next year. Since 1940, all streets in the village have been surfaced.

Now that the village had electricity, a white way was installed along the business street, making Viola the first town on the Kickapoo to be thus lighted. This step forward also came in 1916. Likewise, the hitching posts and watering troughs and pump from the main street and lot west of the present Keach Market, were removed. A hitching yard was established back of the creamery for the benefit of the farmers who drove their teams to town in that era.

When motor vehicles became more numerous, Viola in 1922, invested in a new fire truck with a Ford chassis. This replaced a hose cart and hook and ladder wagon which was drawn by hand, some firemen pulling, others pushing. The Model T Truck served until 1943 when another truck replaced it but is still in running order, being kept for emergency use.

In 1954, Viola's Volunteer Fire Co. thought it time to bring their department up-to-date, so the village purchased a new Fire Truck and complete equipment. It has all the new features of adequate fire protection, as well as a 300 gallon portable pump. If an emergency arises, water can be pumped from the river with the new equipment.

At this time, H. L. Henthorn is the only charter member of the Volunteer Fire Co. still on the force. Fred Baldwin had served 43 yrs.



PART OF THE CENTENNIAL COMMITTEE

Garage and Farm Implements; E. H. Martin, Men's Clothing; J. H. Kaiserman & Co., Meat Market; P. C. Walter, Jeweler; H. O. Wheeler, Feed Store; R. F. Myers, General Merchandise and Farm Implements; F. A. Baldwin & Son, Harness Shop; Dr. Dake, Physician; Dr. Stormont, Physician; Dr. C. H. Nye, Dentist; F. M. Crosby, General Merchandise; R. M. Ericson, General Merchandise and Clothing; Fred Morris, General Merchandise; J. C. Hull & Son, Stock Buyers; Viola News, Geo. Sanford, Editor; Intelligencer, Frazier & Frazier, Editors.

This brings to a close the history of our village through 1910. Already plans were made for further expansion and improvements. C. R. Thompson was contemplating the building of an electric light plant to be run by water power and John Kirkpatrick was making plans for a Cheese Warehouse. Situated as Viola is, in the heart of a dairy section with several cheese factories in the surrounding territory it was an ideal location for a warehouse of this kind.

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## CHAPTER XI

### Viola's History—1910-1955

The next forty-five years of Viola's history showed a great expansion and growth, as well as municipal improvements. There was also much grief, sickness and anxiety caused by two wars and the Spanish Influenza epidemic, the stories of which come in other chapters.

Perhaps one of the most far reaching improvements that began in 1910 was the installation of the Electric Light Plant mentioned in the preceding chapter. It came about under adverse circumstances but as time went on, these troubles eventually were taken care of. The power for the plant was generated by water and it was necessary to build a dam and mill race for this purpose. The first dam built did not have sufficient foundation and the first flood upset it. The next try was a little more successful. Only one wing was washed out, so finally in

as treasurer and Roy Smith has served 28 years to date. The company has served our village faithfully for the past 47 years without pay, risking their lives many times in doing their duty. On many occasions they have gone into the surrounding farm area to fight stubborn fires.

The Community Hall, built during the depression years with W. P. A. labor, is probably the most used building of any erected for public use in the past fifty years. The total cost of the building was \$60,000.00, of which the Federal Government paid three-fourths of the amount. Everything possible was done with hand labor. The rocks were quarried, dressed and laid by hand, as well as the digging of the basement and other labor. Bert Austin was the foreman of a crew, varying from fifteen to thirty men. The heating and plumbing was installed by Kinder Hardware, the electrical work by James E. Stuck and the lumber was furnished by the Nuzum Lumber Co. The building was planned in 1935 and was opened for public use in 1938.

#### VIOLA'S RECREATION PROGRAM

The entertainment and recreation for the village kept pace with the municipal progress down through the following years.

The moving picture theatre made its debut in Viola in May, 1912, when N. O. Wheeler installed the first of its kind for miles around. It was located in the Burgor building where the present printing office is located. It was open every evening but Sunday, and for 10c admission one could see the thrilling adventures and love scenes that were popular in that day. The pictures were all black and white, minus sound, but the clever pianist could duplicate and produce any effect that was necessary to portray the mood and speed of the plot. Later, when Mr. Wheeler's brother, Oscar, built the new feed store to the north of the Shamrock building, the Electric Theatre was moved to the hall on the second floor of the feed store. For a grand opening in the new location, Mr. Wheeler had the high school band play a concert, for which he gave them a part of the cash receipts of the evening. Up to this time, there was no amusement tax levied by the Government, but in 1917, due no doubt to the World War I, a tax of one cent was levied on each 10c of admission.

Mr. Wheeler closed his theatre in 1929 for various reasons and our town was without movies for a few years, until the merchants sponsored free out door shows once a week during the summer months.

Greer and Cannon, the latter a local resident, became interested in a Wild West and Trained Animal show and had their headquarters in Viola. After much practicing and preparation they opened their first season of shows in 1915 on the home grounds in the J. C. Hull meadow east of town. This really put Viola on the map in the entertainment world.

The Shamrock Opera House was always in constant use for vaudeville and stage shows, as well as home talent shows. Because of lack of transportation facilities to larger cities, our local amusements were very much appreciated.

Another high light in the recreation program was the roller skating rink here for a few years in the Hoffman building, at the western end of Commercial Street, near the bridge. Skating was the order of the time every evening and Saturday afternoons, as well.

Our Public Library had its beginning about the same time but it is a chapter of its own and the people who were responsible for its origin need special recognition as few other stepping stones to progress leave a wider path to growth and knowledge than our little library.

Each summer, everyone looked forward to the high class of entertainment put on by the traveling Chautauqua Company that visited our

town for five days, usually sometime in July. It was sponsored by the local citizenry and was very well attended. Each program consisted of music and a lecture by some well known entertainer. The first day's program was usually ushered in by a kiddie parade and each day a playground director entertained the children.

Let us linger by the wayside and take a look into the past as we review the happy memories of the old Viola Fair, which was a great holiday for everyone, both old and young. Do you remember the excitement that was generated as early as the first day of August which the anticipation of fair time brought on. The air fairly reeked of it.

The first Viola fair was held in 1897 and it was an epoch-maker in the lives of our young people for miles around. Many love matches could be traced to those gay three day events. The young folks gathered around the merry-go-round and the young lady who was asked to ride on the swing the most times was considered the belle of the season.

The culinary art of the housewives was greatly stressed, the best cooks brought out the products of their weeks of practice and the Art Hall was the scene of much activity during the judging of the baking, canning and fancy work brought to the fair.

Down under the grandstand, the garden produce was on display. Everyone tried to be a winner in raising the largest specimens of vegetables. The boys on the farm began early in the spring getting their pet colts, calves and lambs ready for the fair. The little girls, too, worked all summer on bits of fancy work and practicing cooking, to be in good form for producing that cake of all cakes "to take to the fair".

The older people lavished every possible attention upon their fine stock and poultry to make it ready "to get the premiums". And when the great time came, everybody went to the fair. For three days, the whole countyside took a vacation.

The father of the family loaded his family into the commodious surrey, or light spring wagon, and with well filled lunch basket and feed bags for the horses, started out early, in order to find a place to "hitch" his team before the crowd arrived. The young man with his top buggy and the lady friend dressed in her very best attire are also in line at the gate. Everyone feels that flutter of excitement, the moment the gay pennants and flying flags on every post and tent top, and the crowd before the entrance comes in sight, and the music of the bands and the tunes of the merry-go-round, reach their ears. And then comes the impatient waiting at the gate for their tickets with father managing to keep the family in tow until the gate swings shut on the last one. Then the mad dash, and with mother's voice, cautioning everyone to meet at a certain place for that picnic dinner, growing fainter as the family scattered in all directions. Some made a bee line to the lemonade stand, others to the side shows, doll racks and novely stands, but sooner or later, winding up at the most popular place of all, the merry-go-round.

Father goes first to the stock exhibits down at the extreme west end of the grounds. Mother takes in the culinary art in what was familiarly called the Art Hall, in the center of the grounds.

Groups of people everywhere were renewing old acquaintances, with much laughter and shaking of hands, all day long. At noon time people began making plans to put their dinners together to have a social hour in the shade of some nearby tree. And for those who did not prepare a picnic dinner, there was always the wonderful chicken dinners served at the eating houses at the right of the ticket office. One of these famous eating places was presided over by Mrs. Mary Gribble, and the other by Mrs. Mary Bond. Here was keen competition, both as to quality of food and to prices charged, although it was generally unde-



**JACOB BENN AND HORSE, "McTOLUS"**

Stage Driver, Village Marshall, Official Race Starter for Viola Fair

stood that no better chicken dinners could be had than that served by either "Mary" and for the reasonable price of 35 cents for adults and 15 cents for children.

At all hours of the day, there wasn't standing room around the eating stand presided over by A. J. Anderson and wife. Here, home made ice cream was sold by the dish, made by the skilled hands of Mrs. Anderson, who worked nights getting ready the large quantity necessary for the next day's trade. No day was counted complete without being finished off with a dish of this special ice cream.

Eventually, everyone worked their way to the Grand Stand, to watch the racing, base ball games and the free attractions. How many can remember the year that a Ladies' Hitching Contest was held? Each lady entering the contest must drive a single horse hitched to an open buggy. The contestant drove their horse to the wire and at a signal from the starter, dismounted, unhitched and unharnessed, then harnessed hitched up again and trotted the horse a half mile. The first premium was \$3.00 and Alta Benn was declared the winner.

Then as the sun began to sink into the west, families began to gather for that ride home. Although weary and tired, they held high anticipation for the events on the following day.

For those who were fortunate to have a little more cash to spend, there was the shows each night at the Shamrock Opera House. For extra inducement and good advertising, two would be admitted to the balcony seats, for the price of one, on opening night.

Viola was always considered tops when it came to putting on Fourth of July celebrations. As many as four thousand would attend these patriotic events. Bands from other towns came in to help our local band furnish music for the day. There was horse racing as well as foot races. Jacob Benn held the honorary job as starter for all races.



#### VIOLA'S BASE BALL TEAM—1907

Back Row—Herman Anderson, Grover Yakley, Omer Benn, John Kaiserman. Middle Row—Clyde Gear, Fred Baldwin, Walter Van Winter, Trace Martin. Front Row—Ed Lepley, Virgil Mathews, Lee Griffin.

Many years have gone by since the Viola Fair was last held and also since the Fourth of July has been celebrated in our park east of town, but their fond memories linger on in the hearts of those who were fortunate to participate in these great events.

Flood lights were installed on the school grounds in 1934 by local business men and every summer evening find the youth of the surrounding communities and also of our village, competing in games of soft ball. There has also been a ball diamond made at the old Fair Ground Park and bleachers erected, and almost every Sunday and holidays our town baseball team played with teams from other localities. Down through the years, Viola has produced several outstanding ball players, such as Omer Benn, who made fame for himself as an exceptionally good pitcher and was fortunate to get into the minor leagues.

Not only in baseball, but in basketball, did our town participate. Every winter our local boys organized a town basketball team and would win the greatest percentage of the games played. They have played against such famous teams as the Harlem Globe Trotters and in 1954 won a game from them. Also the Football stars from the University of Wisconsin came here to challenge our team at basketball, but because our boys were outclassed in height and weight, the game was lost to the out of town players. In tournaments, Viola's team usually came out victorious. Good sportsmanship and clean living has been the keynote to successful winning of our teams.

In 1926 the business men organized a Golf Club and laid out a

course on the E. R. Cushman farm west of town. This became a popular sport for several of our citizens for several years.

The first venture made by the Horse and Colt Show was in November 1930. It made its initial debut known only as the "Colt Show," sponsored by a few farmers and the local agricultural department of the High School, under the leadership of H. M. Eckley. It started out merely as a judging contest and was held in an old livery barn near Wheeler's Feed Store. Since that time, other attractions have been added and the village business men cooperate in making it one "big event" in Viola each year. A horse pulling contest is one of the main events, also a parade of all classes of horses, followed by floats and several bands, as well as 4-H and Future Farmers exhibits.

Fancy work and food displays are a part of the program, as features of the ladies' department. Each year the association books the best free attractions available. All in all, the great day draws a crowd of eight or nine thousand people from far and near. It has all the attractions usually found at a County Fair, but rolled altogether into one big day, climaxed by a dance in the Community Hall at night. This year the organization will celebrate its 25th anniversary.

For several years, our High School Band gave free concerts every Saturday night during the summer, months and with the free movies sponsored by the Business Men on Wednesday evenings, no one need go out of our village searching for good entertainment, especially during the summer. It also brought many people into our town to trade.

Viola was fortunate in having Bowling Alleys for about five years. Clem Adams was the first proprietor and then he later sold to Charley Kotthaus. In 1945 the alleys were purchased by an out of town buyer who moved them to another city.

Much credit should be given to the Methodist Brotherhood for the fine work they have done in sponsoring worthwhile interests for young and old of our community. The first venture in this line was a Hobby Show in 1945. It was surprising how many things of great interest that showed up at his event.

In September of this same year, this group of men sponsored a Flower Show. This brought forth a great deal of enthusiasm for raising more and better flowers and also beautifying the home grounds. These shows were continued for a number of years.

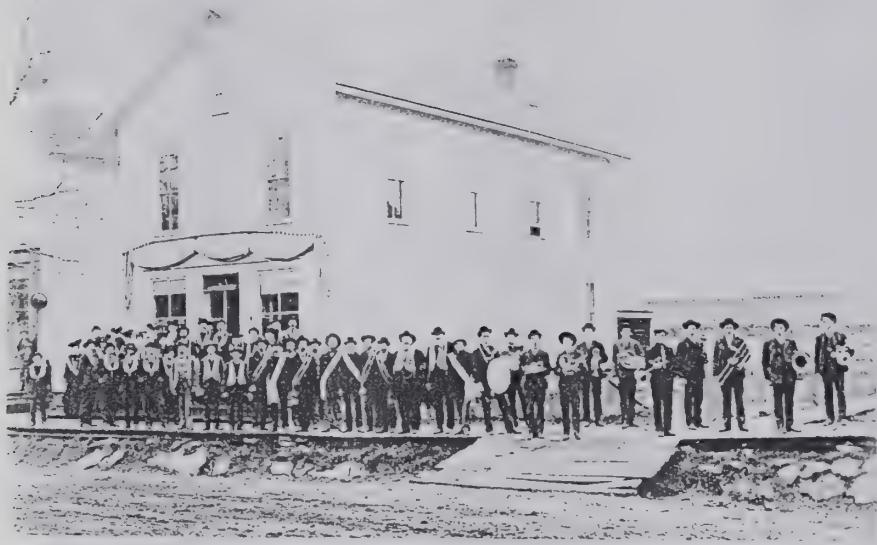
Another accomplishment of this group of men is the annual Halloween Party that brings out our citizens both old and young in various costumes. Prizes are given to the most original and unique outfit.

Our Business Men's Club sponsor Santa Claus Day each year, giving free sacks of candy and nuts to every child in the surrounding country, entertaining them with free movies in the Community Hall and bringing Santa to town for the great occasion.

The Evangelical United Brethren Men's Brotherhood sponsored the Boy Scout Troop which was organized in 1950. Our boys participated in many events with troops from other towns. A Jamboree was held at our park in which Richland Center and Muscoda took part.

The American Legion Auxiliary sponsored a Girl Scout Troup for a few years. At the present time there is neither Boy Scout or Girl Scout Troups in Viola, but both Churches have very active youth Fellowship Groups.

Perhaps not under the classification of entertainment, but equally important is the Isaac Walton League, an organization of a group of men interested in the conservation of wild life. This, no doubt, was due to the encouragement of Ed Hill who was always interested in



**ODD FELLOWS HALL**  
Local Band and Members of Viola's I. O. O. F. about 1900

the welfare of birds and who carried on a winter feeding program assisted by several other men of the village.

The Rod and Gun Club fill our streams with several thousand fish each season, and replenish our woods and fields with game birds.

What other town of its size has had a more diversified and well rounded program of clean and wholesome entertainment than our village, down through the years?

#### VIOLA'S LODGES

Since the village was laid out in 1855, it has supported several different societies, the oldest of these being the I. O. O. F., with five Charter members. They were Salma Rogers, Jonathan Turner, J. A. Cummings, H. Trowbridge and John Gribble.

Thirty-three members were initiated at the first meeting. At the present time there are about forty members.

Viola Chapter No. 197, Order of the Eastern Star, was instituted in Viola on August 8, 1912. Signers of the petition to form the organization were: the Messrs and Mesdames Charles H. Nye, Sr., Edgar Lepley, Sr., W. J. Fishel, R. F. Myers, D. M. Hunter, Mrs. Lucy Tate and Mrs. E. L. Taylor. Mrs. Reba Lepley was elected the first Worthy Matron and W. J. Fishel was the first Worthy Patron. First group to be taken into the Viola Chapter were: Alta Clark, Lulu Mathews, Opal Mathews, Zelma Nye, Orville Clark and Dr. Chas. H. Nye. Mrs. Reba Lepley became secretary in 1914, serving for 35 consecutive years, until her retirement. Walter B. Van Winter served as Worthy Patron for 21 years and Edgar Lepley, Sr., served in that office 11 years.

Mrs. Louise Morrow, wife of Dr. Cecil A. Morrow, was named

Grand Adah for the year 1942. Mrs. Carol Wheeler, wife of Gordon L. Wheeler, was appointed as a page for the Grand Chapter session in 1952. Mrs. Ruby Hartwell, wife of the late E. B. Hartwell, of Preston, Minnesota, received an honorary life membership in Viola Chapter on October 28, 1954. The 1955 membership numbers 86, with members living in Wisconsin, Minnesota, Illinois, Iowa, Florida, Colorado, Washington, Oregon, California, Missouri and Hawaii.

In 1885, The Jerry Turner Post No. 85, of the G. A. R. was organized. The Relief Corps, an auxiliary of the G. A. R., was instituted in 1894. In the early 1930 it was disbanded but reorganized in 1939 as the Viola Justin Dake Women's Relief Corps No 46, in honor of one of Viola's boys who gave his life in World War I. His mother and sister were members of the local lodge. Mrs. Lillian Porter was elected as President at the time of organization, Gladys Losey, Jessie Deaver and Bessie Keach have served different terms as President.

The Masonic Lodge was organized in June, 27, 1893, with six Charter members, as follows: Wm. J. Waggoner, Jonathan Turner, N. H. Burgor, Richard Tubbs, W. E. Belt and T. B. Elliott.

The Charter was finally granted June 14, 1894. The officers were W. J. Waggoner, Worshipful Master; James Treseder, Sr. Warden; A. J. McCarty, Jr. Warden; J. H. Frazier, Treasurer; Jonathan Turner, Secretary; N. H. Burgor, Sr. Deacon; J. M. Cushman, Jr. Deacon; George Waggoner and W. E. Belt, Stewards; E. R. Cushman, Tyler.

The Modern Woodmen of America had ten Charter members and was organized in 1895.

Mt. Nebo Rebekah Lodge No. 29, was instituted on June 4, 1890, following an application for a Charter by Mr. and Mrs. Wm. J. Waggoner. It is impossible to list the Charter members as the old records are not complete. The Lodge has prospered during the past years and were often called upon to help institute other Rebekah Lodges in this area. Three of the members, Mrs. Etta Kinder, Mrs. Arminta Hill and Mrs. Stella Van Winter, were honored with the highest degree given to a Rebekah, being that of the Decoration of Chivalry, conferred by members of the Patriarchs Militant, I. O. O. F. At the present time the lodge has 63 members with a popular degree team under the direction of Mrs. Pearl Raether.

The Woman's Christian Temperance Union was organized in 1887.

In 1947, the men of Viola organized a Lion's Club with Claire Blakely as President. This club did not survive long however, although it had its merits.

#### OUR SCHOOLS

Our High School and Grade School come in for their share of credit in the progress of our town. The trophy cases in the High School building are full of mementos of winnings in different contests held in the Kickapoo valley. Both in speaking and Athletic contests, Viola usually placed at or near the top in honors.

The first High School Band was organized in 1912 with Principal W. F. Livingston as Director. It was made up entirely of boys, with the following members: Justin Dake, J. C. Ferguson, Ivan Swancutt, Cecil Ambrose, Pearly Joseph, Dwight Kellicut, Ephriam Miller, Harold Carpenter, Newton Boggs, Carol Kellogg, Clyde Savacool, Lester Griffin, Willie Slaback, Mac Marshall, Glen Walter, Eldred Dobson, Willis Sandmire, Earl Sellars and Fred Matthes. This band broke up in a few years, but in 1930, another one was organized that has stood the test of the past twenty-five years. The first director was Otto Brown, of Viroqua, and later, Mr. Brewer took charge. Since that time there have been several directors with different degrees of success, but the band usually

has brought home laurels of honor to our village in concert work as well as solo numbers. The school choruses, too, have been a great asset to our town as well as the school. In 1931 a Band Mothers association was formed with a membership of fifty ladies.

The president was Mrs. W. B. Van Winter; Vice President, Mrs. Floyd Lieurance; Sec., Mrs. Wm. Webb; Treas., Mrs. J. E. Kerbaugh

In 1927, our Agriculture boys won championship honors the first time they had ever participated in the Live Stock Judging Contest at Madison. The team comprised these three boys: Bernard Smith, Henry Hill and Theron Coy.

The first Future Farmers of America Chapter was organized in May of 1929. The officers were President, Bernard Smith, Vice President, Harlon Chaffee; Secretary, Lynford Looker; Treasurer, Byron Hoke; Reporter, Lyle Wanless; Advisor, Mr. H. M. Eckley.

Much credit should go to Mr. Eckley, the Agriculture teacher of our High School, for the outstanding work he did in promoting extra curricular activities in relation to the farm youth of our community. The Future Farmers organization did great work in its field by promoting interest in better farming methods and better live stock raising. In connection, Judging Contests of all types of farm animals and produce, attending State Fairs, and other state meets, brought them in contact with the latest methods of farm management and animal husbandry. Our Future Farmers retain their active interest in all these lines up to the present time, under the leadership of the best Agriculture Instructors that our school board can secure.

It was through Mr. Eckley's help and guidance that the first 4-H groups were organized in 1934. Perhaps the two communities that first organized were Ekleberry and Tunnelville, but others followed in close order, including one in the Village of Viola. No organization has had a more far reaching effect on the youth of our community than those of the 4-H clubs. Those who have had the training and experience in club work are making better citizens of tomorrow and they are becoming the back bone of our town and surrounding country. It is the youth who are the products of these same 4-H clubs that are the pioneers of this twentieth century. Not enough credit can be given to those men and women who gave their time freely as leaders and promoters of this great movement, and credit is also due to those parents who have encouraged their families to take part in these clubs and for the things they stand for, Head, Heart, Hand, and Health.

The Agriculture Department of our High School has grown to such proportions that it was necessary to build a separate unit for this purpose. The building was erected in 1931, just north of the present Grade School.

In 1939, Viola saw the need of reaching out into the rural areas to bring in more pupils to our school, thus, the school bought their first bus for transportation of pupils. Later, more routes were established and more buses purchased. This made it possible for all farm youth to receive a High School education.

Because of the enlarged enrollment and modern improvements in our School System, a great need is felt at the present time for further expansion in our building facilities, so plans are going forward for a large addition to be built this following year. This will bring it up to an efficiency level with other schools of equal size.

More could be said about our schools and special mention should be made of those who guided our Educational System through many shoals of troubled waters. Such men as W. F. Livingston, who not only directed along educational lines but spiritually, as well. Ted Reed, Gordon Heuer, Derward McVey, and others, down to the present time,

with supporting faculties equally as good. Now, at the close of the century, with Gordon Sardeson at the head of our school system, it will continue to turn out students well qualified to go on to higher schools of learning and places of employment. Viola is proud of our schools because of honors won both in scholastic and extra curricular subjects.

#### VIOLA'S BANKS

Financially, our village affairs must have made great strides as we boasted of two banks during the period of 1915 to 1930.

The State Bank of Viola was organized in 1905. It had already outgrown one building erected in 1906, so a new building was built on the corner of Main and Commercial streets which was officially opened February of 1916. E. B. Bender was President; D. M. Hunter and L. J. McBain, Vice Presidents; W. I. Griffin, Cashier; and Ella Hufford as Assistant Cashier. The second floor of this building for years was used as the Telephone Exchange, as well as Doctor and Dentist offices.

The Farmers State Bank was organized in 1914 and had its official opening in November of that year. It was located in the Shamrock building. It started out with deposits of \$30,000 and increased to \$250,000. in four years. President Babb and Cashier James E. Kerbaugh, served the bank for fifteen years. Otto Sanford as Assistant Cashier and C. L. Simmons as bookkeeper, both started in the bank as young men. The directors were Ed Hill, A. R. Lawton, D. S. Simmons, Eli Kinsey, and Chas. Kinder.

Because the economic advantages of the lower cost of operating one bank was evident, the stockholders of both banks met in separate sessions and voted unanimously to merge and on January 1, 1930, the two banks became one and occupied the State Bank building, using the name, Farmers State Bank. At the time of the merger, Fred Matthes was President of the State Bank and John Babb was president of the Farmers Bank. After the new officers were elected, John Babb continued as President; Jas. Kerbaugh as Executive President; A. B. Schroeder, Cashier; Otto Sanford and C. L. Simmons, Assistant Cashiers. The combined banks had a capital stock of \$45,000.

March 3, 1933, the National Government declared a holiday for all banks in the United States and our bank was closed for two weeks. Congress passed a law insuring deposits up to \$5,000. in 1934, and people all over the country regained their confidence in the banks of the nation. Business began to pick up and in a year or two, everything became normal. In a few years Congress passed another law, increasing the insurance on deposits up to \$10,000. and made bank stocks non-assessable, which built up further confidence in the banks.

Our Viola Bank has been the hub of business in our village and surrounding area because it has made expansion possible through loans for those who have wished to establish or enlarge themselves in some line of business. If it were not for the convenience of the local bank's credit system, many businesses could not operate. The bank is here in our town to give service, for cashing checks, depositing money and making loans, and like all the advantages we take for granted, we fail to realize the important part it plays in our daily lives.

Besides the advantages mentioned, the local bank also gives the service of a large Insurance Agency, which, because of this, you need not go out of town to insure your property and receive any adjustments that become necessary.

In this Centennial year of 1955 we can safely say that the prosperity of our town and surrounding area can be judged quite accurately by the amount of deposits in our local bank which total over \$1,000,000. and it also carries a capital account of \$172,000.00.

Amos Schroeder, the Cashier, came into the State Bank in 1922 when but a young man, and started his banking career as bookkeeper but soon was made Assistant Cashier. In 1929 he was advanced to the position of Cashier. After the merger of the two banks, because of his capability and integrity, he was made Cashier of the combined banks and has continued in that capacity for the past twenty-five years. His sound judgment and pleasant personality has won for him the confidence of everyone in this community. Not only has he given 33 years of service to the bank but has served the Village as Clerk for the past 35 years. He has held positions of trust in the Masonic and Odd Fellow lodges, as well as the American Legion. His place in the affairs of our village and the hearts of our citizens need not be questioned when he has been able to hold these positions of trust so many years.

Otto Sanford, another young man starting his life's career, chose the banking business and began as a Bookkeeper and assistant cashier in the old Farmers State Bank in 1925. He continued in this capacity after the merger of the two banks, then was put in charge of the Insurance Agency which has grown into a large business because of his capable management. A few years ago he was elected Executive Vice President of the Board of Directors and this past year he became President of the bank. Mr. Sanford has given 30 years of conscientious service to our banks and merits complete trust of the people who put their financial affairs in his conservative hands.

C. L. Simmons, another local boy, started in the old Farmers State Bank as bookkeeper in 1925 and continued in the bank for a few years after the merger. After 11 years of experience, he accepted a position as Cashier of the South Wayne Bank in 1936. He still retains this position of trust after almost 20 years of service to that community.

Ella Hufford has held a position of trust in our village's financial affairs since she first filled the job as bookkeeper and assistant cashier in the early years of the Viola State Bank at the time that W. I. Griffin was cashier. After spending six or seven years in this capacity she left and took a position as clerk in the Department Store, later going back to the Farmers State Bank in 1934. She has spent the past 21 years as bookkeeper and the pleasant smile with which she greets the public has won for her a host of friends.

#### VIOLA'S POSTOFFICE AND R. F. D.

The first Postoffice to be established in our village was in 1858 by Cyrus Turner, the founder of Viola. It was located in his home in conjunction with a general store that he ran. Later (and the years are not recorded) George Tate was Postmaster. He was followed by Wm. J. Waggoner, up to 1885. The next change came when J. Turner had charge of the mail from 1885 to 1889. It is not recorded where the post-office was housed during these years but in 1889 when D. B. Sommars was postmaster it was in the building that later became the printing office. For one year Gertrude Wells became Postmistress and the post-office continued in a part of the Intelligencer office for the next five years. R. H. Buchanan succeeded Mrs. Wells for the years 1893 to 1897. Again Gertrude Wells Frazier had the office for eleven years. In 1908 W. I. Griffin was appointed Postmaster. About this time the office was moved to the Shamrock building and remained there for four or five years, then brought back up the street to the Sloulin building when Lester Henthorn became Postmaster in 1913.

When the administration changed back to Republican in 1923, Fred Hurless was appointed and he held the office until 1935 when C. H. Mullendore succeeded him. Mr. Mullendore is still postmaster, having held the office for the past twenty years. In the meantime the office was moved into the east end of the Wm. Webb building and then

later to the present location, the east end of the Henry Clift hardware.

It will be of interest to everyone to know the history of our Rural Free Delivery Routes out of Viola. The first mail carried out of Viola was sometime between 1898 and 1900. Stephen Frazier was the carrier and his route was 28 miles, serving 75 families and he handled 25 to 35 pieces of mail daily, with perhaps five or ten daily papers. The span of grey ponies, hitched to the top buggy, left the office at 7 o'clock sharp in the morning and reported upon returning at 3 o'clock in the afternoon, except during the winter months. Many times Mr. Frazier returned with his lantern lit, and 7 or 8 o'clock found him still busy at his sorting desk.

Mr. Frazier resigned on account of poor health in 1908 and Jack Loveless was appointed carrier on Route 1. In the early days of driving, Jack's outfit was any old road cart or small, light weight buggy, with a pair of run away western ponies. In the spring he went horse back with one horse ahead to carry the mail bags. Fifty pieces of mail was a large delivery and very few daily papers. It was an all day's job in mud, snow or rain, and but few money orders or letters were picked up from the rural mail boxes. Times have changed as of 1931. Now the carrier leaves in a mail car loaded to the top, with parcel post, daily papers for most every mail box, many letters and packages, totaling 528 pieces for one delivery, and serving 200 families on a daily route of 44 miles in length..

In 1901 or 1902, two more routes were laid out and Lafe Barber was appointed carrier on Route 2 and Orville Clark on Route 3. These routes covered a rough territory and served many families that were anxious for daily word from the outside world. Lafe Barber, carrier on Route 2, was a favorite among his patrons and although he left the office at exactly 7 o'clock each morning, the hour of his return was quite varied as Lafe and his friends did much visiting. He chose for his job the year around, a good substantial road cart and one horse. He carried 45 to 55 pieces of mail and served about 80 families. He was retired at 65 years of age on a Government pension for a job well done.

Tom Dunn drove route for eleven months after Lafe's retirement and then Roy Sanford passed a carrier's examination, receiving the highest standings and was given the job. During good weather, Roy started with his Ford car but much of his early driving was with horses; and the receipts from Route 2 were none too good in those days either. In 1931 Roy had a Ford Coach car filled with mail. Most every box had a daily and the parcel post on Route 2 was heavy. He had 115 families to serve and handled about 300 pieces daily and traveled 38 miles. It is safe to say that this route has the steepest hills and roughest roads, yet Roy met it willingly. He also carried the locked pouch to West Lima.

Route 3 was established with the idea of reaching a vicinity surrounding Viola that did not make Viola their home town. The mail on this route was carried by Orville Clark for twenty-three years. After illness overtook Orville, his wife carried the mail several months. He was well liked by his patrons as he was sincere, exacting and willing, and by his efficient service, the business increased each year. He drove for the most part, a canopy top buggy, with always a good team, and the time for reaching each box never varied a great deal each day.

John Bernard, with his high markings, passed the carrier's examination and was appointed to serve Route 3 in 1926. He was the junior carrier at the time of appointment. He served 118 families in 1931 and the increased daily business showed his personal interest in every box. At this time he handled around 375 pieces of mail and traveled 38 miles.

That part of his route laying in Liberty Township was oiled, for which he was thankful.

Route 4 was established in 1907 with Nathan Dougherty being appointed regular carrier. This route supplied eighty families and covered a route of rough roads and high hills. Nate was called by his fellow workers, "The Gentleman Carrier". He drove the best span of horses, hitched to the most substantial buggy that could be purchased. He took pride in his work and in the up-keep of his outfits. He was friendly, talkative and put real interest in the business. Owing to ill health, Nate resigned, and Harvey Sanford continued the carrying of mail on this route. Harvey drove for eleven years. After his resignation, the routes became consolidated into three longer routes.

In the olden days we found Harry Frazier carrying on Route 1 as substitute. Otto Sanford substituted on Route 2 many months in the winter and spring. Virgil Hurless assisted in drivng Route 3. Since the time the first route was established, faithful Winfred Ewing was always ready to substitute for any of the carriers.

Much credit is given to the wives of all of these carriers for their assistance and patience, while waiting hours for dinners and suppers, while the drivers were stuck in some mud hole or snow bank.

Now, after approximately fifty years of Rural Free Delivery service, changes have taken place, even since 1931. John Bernard has put in 29 years of service and at the present time his route covers 45 miles of hard surfaced roads. No mud to wade and his route is well taken care of during the winter months. However, the number of families he serves has dropped to 110 because many farms have been vacated during his years of driving on this route.

Roy Sanford retired from his carrier job in 1952 and Kenneth Keach took over his route. Lee Bunker has been carrying mail on Route 1 since the retirement of Jack Loveless sixteen years ago. Lee drives 43 miles every day with a car, but he was the first to use a jeep with a snow plow attachd for winter driving. His car is loaded with mail as he has 157 mail boxes to stop at each day.

No matter what the weather is like or in what condition the roads are, the mail must be delivered or a reasonable attempt made by the carrier to do so. In the era before the radio, the farmer and his wife, eagerly awaited the mail man as he was their only means of contact with the outside world. Even today, with all the modern advantages that the rural people enjoy, the coming of the mail man still means much to those living on farms. They owe a great debt of gratitude to those men, who, down through the years, in all kinds of weather and roads have made their routes and saw to it that the "mail went through".

#### VIOLA PARKS

Every city, village and hamlet in Wisconsin boast of their parks, zoos, swimming pools and playgrounds. There are many fascinating places for the tourist to visit in Wisconsin, with twenty-one state parks, 224,000 acres of recreational vacation land, and hundreds of road side parks. It is safe to state, there is no other town the population of Viola, (785 residents) that supports and maintains four parks open to the public, free of charge.

Viola, beautiful for situation, is located on both sides of the Vernon and Richland County line, in the center of a rich farming district and is the geographic center of the Kickapoo Valley. The village surrounded by hills of Mt. Nebo, Mt. Sheldon, Cat Head, Castle Rock, Elks Point, Sylvan Rocks, and a range of hills, is an ideal spot to have located four beautiful parks. First, the former Viola Fair Grounds park; second,

the Ed Hill Memorial park; third, the Banker park; and fourth, the Community park.

In 1902, Wm. Waggoner deeded to the Viola Fair Association, a piece of land one and one-half miles east of the village on Highway 56, formerly owned by John Sellars, Wm. Thompson and Eph Bender. The association improved the spot with a grandstand, race track, stands, buildings and watering places, and in due time the acreage was an up-to-date fair grounds.

For twenty-four years the Viola business men and progressive citizens maintained and operated a fair each year in October that was a credit to the community. The first secretary was Wm. Thompson, a promoter of harness racing. He owned a string of trotters and the fair was known to have some of the best races in Wisconsin. The second secretary, Andy McCarty, was interested in the honey, agriculture, fruit, dairy products and domestic departments. John Frazier, the third secretary, believed in advertising in newspapers and with posters and bills, and with a team, he traveled the length of the Kickapoo Valley advertising the big fair. Warren Griffin, the fourth secretary, had interests in finances. He wanted the fair to make money. He hired a band, the program of racing continued and expenses were less. Yet, the fair did not pay off the mortgage owned by the Beaver Finance Co. Walter Van Winter was the fifth and last secretary. The State Aid was abolished and the Village was unable to support the fair. Small premiums were paid, the races continued, and the last fair was a success, but with all odds against the officers, it was decided to sell the grounds to the Village for a park. On October 21, 1926, the president of the association, Oscar Wheeler, and the secretary, Walter Van Winter, with Ed Lepley and Amos Schroeder as witnesses, turned the deed over to the Village.

The property has been named the Viola Fair Grounds Park. The property is for the convenience of the public. Hundreds enjoy picnics, ball games, camping, trailer parking, family reunions and private parties throughout the summer months, with no charge for any of the conveniences furnished by the Village.

#### **Viola Park No. 2**

The corner where the beautiful Community building now stands was owned by Ed Hill. On February 18, 1934, he deeded the ground to the Village for a park. Ed was civic minded, his parents were among the early settlers in the valley, and his wish was to dedicate the valuable land in the heart of the Village as a park, in memory of his mother and all early settlers of pioneer days. The Village accepted the gift and the spot has been kept in shape for the comfort of the public. It is a restful place for the shopper, and in due time, a marker will no doubt be erected, inscribed as Ed Hill planned.

#### **Viola Park No. 3**

There was once a flour mill, known as the Cushman mill, located near the bridge. This mill was furnished power from the dam on the Kickapoo river. The mill building was removed. An electric power house was built when Viola had its first electric lights. The Village bought the light plant in 1941. Time changes the old landmarks into parks and in this case it is often spoken of as being one of the finest improvements of late years in the village.

The spot was a weed patch, the home of frogs, snakes, mosquitoes, flies and a most unsightly entrance to the village, when Lee Banker, a public spirited citizen, decided to clear it for a park. The village furnished materials for filling and painted benches and tables. To Mr. and Mrs. Banker, the credit is given for making the small patch of ground a desirable place to stop and have a picnic. The park with the wel-

come sign, "Banker Park", and the two old water wheels as a gate entrance, is a credit to the village.

#### **Viola Park No. 4**

This park, located near the Methodist church, where once the old Abe Cushman barn was located, is the park of all parks in the village, not for its beauty, but for the all-purpose gatherings. The Horse and Colt Show is centralized on this block. The free moving picture shows, sponsored by the merchants of the village, are held here. In winter, the ground is flooded and our folks enjoy ice skating. When the evangelists come to town they are welcomed and the religious outdoor services are held there. There is no welcome sign out. It is well known that the park is the general meeting place for all kinds of gatherings.

The land is owned by the Methodist church organization. They make no charge for the use of the space and welcome all kinds of entertainment that is of benefit to the stranger, the children of the community, or the public.

Much could be written of the scenic drives in and near the village. At all seasons, the valley is beyond words to describe. Viola welcomes the tourist and local people to use the parks. They are all free.

#### **The Viola Public Library**

In presenting this article, I am prompted to do so out of loyalty to the home town, its local institutions, admiration and esteem for the pioneer promoters, and to express the gratitude of the residents of Viola for the fact that this village, with a population of 780, maintains a public library unequaled in any other like locality in the State of Wisconsin.

The facts and material for this review of the Viola Library were furnished by Mrs. Zella Pellett, librarian for the past seven years; Mrs. Alta Clark, a pioneer of the village, and librarian for 29 years; Mrs. Reba Lepley, who with Rev. and Mrs. G. W. Longenecker, promoted the first library; and Lee H. Griffin, of Chicago, a native son, who spent his boyhood and youth in Viola.

The first library had no home owned books but was a traveling library from Madison. A room in the school house was used, with the teachers and volunteer workers on duty two evenings a week. So many people became interested, it was deemed advisable to move to more spacious quarters, in the basement of the bank building, with Merle Dake as librarian. In 1916, owing to floods and dampness of the basement, the bank directors moved the books to rooms on the second floor.

In 1918, Mrs. Alta Clark accepted the position of librarian, with a board of advisors, consisting of Mrs. Millie Washburn, Mrs. Mable Harn Kanable and Frank Walsh. Local organizations sponsored socials and entertainments to provide funds for books. With membership fees, fines and book donations, Mrs. Clark soon built up a collection with the six months book release that encouraged the pupils of the public schools and many shut-ins to patronize the library regularly.

In July of 1941 there were 532 registrants, with 3,321 volumes that had been loaned during the year, 29 gift books and \$15.00 collected from fines. A school of instruction was held at Black River Falls for librarians and assistants and Mrs. Ruth Tilley attended. She was instructed in the art of binding, remodeling and mending. Mrs. Tilley was instrumental in having the library made a part of the State Library Commission, which has been a decided help for many years. In 1947, Mrs. Clark received an honorary life membership from the Wisconsin Library Association. She resigned as local librarian, because of ill health, and the present efficient librarian is Mrs. Zella Pellett.

There are 250 family cards registered to date. During the past

year, books have been donated by Shirley Keach, Jeanette Fosdal, Maude Renick, Beverly Bender, Ella Zettler, Ruth and Donnie Sanford, Mrs. Leo Palmer, Clair Blakely, Betty Hill and Lee H. Griffin. In former years, many have contributed books and magazines to the library.

During the years of the W. P. A., the village built a beautiful community building and the library was moved into rooms fitted with suitable shelves and furnishings. The rooms are open to the public on afternoons and evenings on Mondays, Fridays and Saturdays.

The pursuit of information relative to our subject necessitated a visit to the library, as there was an important question to be answered. How is it possible for a town the size of Viola to own and maintain a library of this scope, with such an interesting and discriminating selection of volumes, some that are priceless, on a diversity of subjects? A plaque on the wall gave us the answer. It reads:

To perpetuate the loving memory  
of our mother and father  
Cynthia Griffin  
Warren Irvin Griffin  
who lived and died in Viola, Wis.,  
these books are placed here.  
1949 Lee H. Griffin 1949  
Lester Samuel Griffin

The Village Council has granted permission to Lee H. Griffin to give cases and shelves and extend them, as well as, continue to add to the number of books. At present there are 465 such books in the library. A copy of the Ginn Sketchbook was placed in the memorial collection of books in the Viola Public Library and is of interest to all who have the privilege of using the Griffin Memorial Library. All who are interested in the library, and work for the better Viola, have every reason to be proud of this man who has as his hobby, "The Viola Library".

A little of the history of the accomplishments of the father in whose memory the shelves of books were dedicated is here related.

W. I. Griffin came to Viola in the early years of 1900 and had an interest in a Men's Clothing Store. Although he did not operate long in this capacity he held offices in Civic affairs for many years until health failed him. He was Cashier of the State Bank of Viola for some time, Postmaster for five years, Clerk of our school board, Secretary of Viola Fair Association, as well as taking an active interest in the Methodist Church and the Masonic Lodge. His name will long be remembered as having played a part in the affairs of this town.

#### Medical and Dental Profession

The health of a community is of vital importance, not only as it concerns individuals, but to the community as a whole and it is a strong asset in determining business relations, both to those who reside in its borders and those who may settle in its trade territory.

Viola has always had the best of professional health service. Several doctors have already given of their service, twenty-four hours of the day and night, that others might enjoy health, and in doing so, forfeited their own health and in some instances, their very life. Much tribute should be paid to those faithful men, that forgot self in a full time dedication to the welfare of mankind. When a call came at any hour of day or night, by telephone or horse back messenger, no doctor questioned the need, whether it was a death bed call or a plain imaginary stomach ache. They immediately hitched the horses to a cart, buggy or sleigh, no matter what the roads or weather might be, and

started out. Many times, trips were made by horse back in the wee hours of the night, to usher into the world a new citizen.

We pause here to mention those men who, in this twentieth century, have served our community with a life time of devotion. It can be truthfully said that Dr. Dake gave full measure in unselfish service to our town. He came, as a young man, to Viola and left it through death's door. The same can be said of Dr. C. J. Stormont, who was taken during the influenza epidemic of 1918.

Dr. Parke, after graduating from the University of Illinois in 1905, spent one year as Intern at Cook County Institute, then came to Sylvan and established his office there until coming to Viola in 1918. At this time he was called into the army and served for the duration and then returned to resume his practice here. He was commissioned a 1st Lieutenant in the Medical Corps. The Kickapoo Valley was always home to Dr. Parke as he was born in the Town of Bloom, not over ten miles from Viola. He spent his entire professional life in this community and served in different civic capacities as well. He was Health Officer for many years, also served on the School Board for a time. Dr. Parke, too, finished out his life with service to his community, for he administered to his patients' need, even after he was confined to his home, just prior to his death in 1949.

Dr. Griswold spent some time in Viola in the early 1900's and married a local girl, Bess Burgor. He then practiced medicine in Bloom City, going from there to Mazomanie.

Dr. Weber came to Viola and rented the office of Dr. Stormont, after his death, and remained a few years, then locating elsewhere.

Dr. C. A. Morrow was also a young man, just having finished his internship when he came to Viola in 1932. It was during the depression when money was scarce and collections were poor. There were times when he did not have the price of a hair cut, but he administered to one and all, regardless of whether they could pay or not. Many of his doctoring bills were paid in produce and his larder was usually well filled with poultry, eggs and meat. It was this service that he gave so freely, when times were hard, that endeared him to many people, far and near.

When Dr. Morrow first came to Viola, he had his office on the second floor of the Farmers State Bank building, but a few years later, he built an office with three rooms across the street. After serving in this community fifteen and one-half years, for health reasons, he sold his practice, office and residence to Dr. Joseph Meboe and moved to Kenosha, where he opened an office, specializing in allergies.

The Dentist profession has also served our town to its fullest capacity. The first one was Dr. Hale Simmons. Dr. James Ferebee was here for a few years. Dr. C. H. Nye, Jr., came shortly after 1900 and practiced until failing health forced him to retire. He passed away in 1926.

Dr. Harrington came sometime prior to 1920 and opened up his dental offices on the second floor of the Henry Clift Hardware building. He later moved to rooms over the Farmers State Bank. In 1926 he sold his practice to Dr. Houehan who later disposed of it to Dr. I. J. Davidson, a young man, just out of Dental School.

Sometime during 1932, Dr. Davidson sold out to Dr. Jas. Lawton, a local boy, a son of Mr. and Mrs. Ray Lawton, of Viola. He remained but a few years, moving to Viroqua, at which time he sold his business to Dr. Peters who remained as a permanent dentist until the fall of 1953 when he closed his offices and enlisted in the Army for two years service, receiving a commission as Lieutenant Colonel. He expects to return and resume his practice at the end of his two year period.

### Business Establishments

Viola had an old line of progressive business firms who steered the destiny of our village triumphantly through the years of wars and depression. It is to these old stand-bys that our town owes a debt of gratitude, not just because of their business successes, but of their firm beliefs and progressive ideas that they gave for the advancement of their home town.

It is a fact, beyond question, that the grocery and meat market, as purveyor to human needs, forms a very essential part in relation to a town's business center; and so, without question, is the part that A. J. Anderson played in the growth of our town and community. It was through long years of experience in dealing with the public that he had learned their wants and needs and it was through service that he endeared himself to all those who patronized his business. For 34 years he was a Viola merchant and for 17 years prior to his death in 1929, he was in the same location, the corner meat market, on the ground where the Community Building now stands.

Mr. Anderson came to Viola in 1881 at the age of 22 years and started to work for Chas. Tate in the general store. Three years later, he worked for A. H. Krouskop & Co. After eight years experience, he started in business for himself in the general merchandise line in a building that stood near the County line on Commercial Street. He ran this store for seventeen years.

When Mr. Anderson, who always took an active part in civic affairs, was elected Supervisor of Assessors for three years, he sold out to John Jewell in 1906. He spent a few years farming near Viola and then bought out J. H. Kaiserman's meat market and grocery business in 1912, his final enterprise.

All the fresh meat and much of the smoked meat that was sold over Mr. Anderson's counters came from the community surrounding Viola. A market of no little importance, as may be realized, when Mr. Anderson's trade warranted a pay check to farmers of \$7,000 to \$8,000 per year in payment for beef, veal, pork and mutton, on the hoof. He did his own slaughtering, maintaining a plant for that purpose. He made all his own sausages, bolognas and hamburger in large quantities. He also kept fresh fish along with salted, spiced and pickled fish products. He carried a grocery line as well as fresh fruits in season.

Mr. Anderson was a staunch believer in anything that made for further advancement in his community and it is to men like him that we owe the progressiveness of our village.

At his death, in 1929, his sons, Herbert and Gerald, continued on in the meat and grocery business. They later branched out into a wholesale enterprise along with the regular line. They slaughtered a large amount of stock each week, furnishing dressed meat, bologna and sausage to meat markets in other towns.

In 1935 the Anderson meat market was moved across the street into the east half of the Clift Hardware building. Plans were being made to build the Community Building, which necessitated moving of the two business buildings standing on the proposed building site. One of these being the Anderson meat market.

The Anderson Brothers continued the wholesale line and with the help of their brother-in-law, Raymond Sime, they ran two meat trucks out of Viola until 1941 when Herbert moved to Milwaukee. However, Mr. Sime continued to run his own meat truck, selling bologna and other meat to out of town trade. In 1946 he bought the north half of the Webb store building and remodeled it, installing a large freezing compartment and Locker Plant. This has proved to be a great business

asset to the community at large, for with the new trend into frozen meat and other foods, a plant of this kind is a necessity. Since returning from service, Ray Sime, Jr., is associated with his father in the Locker Plant.

A citizen of high worth would not adequately describe Jap Hull, for the many years of service he gave to the community in which he lived a life time. Jap, as everyone called him, had the distinction of being the first white child born in what is now the village of Viola. His parents moved to this village Octobe 3, 1876. On October 4 of the same year, Jap was born. He was married in 1876 to the former Mary Blakley and had two children, Nellie and Bliss. Jap was active in the business affairs of the village all his life and took great pride in his home town and often referred to it as the "Garden of Eden".

He had several vocations in his life time, namely, a feed and grain store, the lumber business, cattle raising, farming, cheese making and he owned and operated a meat market at one time, in the village. But the one job that he enjoyed the most was his dealing in livestock. In his friendly way he built for himself a monument of industry that will be remembered by all those who knew him for years to come.

He began his career of livestock buying before the railroad came to Viola. He drove his cattle to Soldiers Grove to the railroad at that place. His son was active in the business with him and the firm was known as J. C. Hull & Son, until Jap's death in 1929.

The Kinder Hardware Store, that has served Viola for many years, was a business built from a small start into a large and successful enterprise by Charley Kinder, a native of the Boscobel area. He was born on a farm and operated one himself until he came to Viola in 1896. He started in the hardware business in 1898 when he purchased the stock of goods of Joseph Porter and moved it across the street where Oscar Barnes kept a furniture store. He bought this building and it still serves as the home of the Kinder Hardware up to the present time.

In the early days of development in this section of the country, the man who had confidence in the future of his town and was willing to invest his money in the face of conditions then existing, was indeed a community builder. Mr. Kinder was of this type and his business stands as a monument of his life time endeavor.

Mr. Kinder had four large warehouses filled with his stock of goods, which included furniture, plumbing, farm implements, woven and barb wire and steel posts, as well as hardware.

At one time, he sold his business to Claude Walter, who later sold to Wm. Webb. For nine years, Mr. Webb operated the hardware business and then traded it to Virgil Bender for a garage business. Once more, Mr. Kinder became owner, when he purchased it from Mr. Bender in 1922. Here he served as a public spirited business man until his death in 1933.

He always gave freely of his time and money and firmly believed that his business had its future in the growth and prosperity of Viola.

Prior to his death, his nephew, Ernest Kinder, helped him in the hardware, and so continued for a year, working in this capacity. In 1934 he and his brother-in-law, Otto Sikir, purchased the business of the Charley Kinder estate and still continue to operate under the name of Kinder Hardware. For over a half century, this location has been the home of a large hardware business, that close knits our town with that of the surrounding community.

Walter B. Van Winter began his newspaper career when but a young man, coming to Viola in 1906, as a printer, to work for the Viola Publishing Company, working with Editor Geo. E. Sanford in publishing the Viola News. In 1910, Mr. Sanford resigned as editor and Mr. Van

Winter took over, and in 1911 he bought the Viola News of the Publishing Co. and the Intelligencer, of Frazier & Frazier and combined the two papers, using the name Viola News. Up to this time the Viola News had been in one of the buildings that stood on the location of the Community Hall. It later moved to the Shamrock building until the two papers were united and then the original home of the Intelligencer became the printing office. After spending 26 years in this location, Mr. Van Winter bought the N. H. Burgor building across the street and moved his business into its new location in June of 1939.

After 37 years of continuous service to this community, as owner and publisher of our town's paper he sold his business in 1948 to Jack Vermuel, a veteran of World War II. In all, Mr. Van Winter spent 42 years of his life in the newspaper work in our village. Perhaps no other citizen of our town has had any more influence in the promoting of better business than the editor of our town's weekly paper. He kept the spark of civic pride always glowing by his articles on the advantages and beauty of our village which encouraged it to ever reach out for chances of improvement. He has always taken an active part in the affairs of our schools, lodges and Methodist church and has held many offices of importance in all of these organizations, including the village board. It takes men like Walter Van Winter to make a live town.

In November 1891, Gertrude and Clift Wells with their two children, Hattie and Frank, boarded the stage at Richland Center, driven by Jake Benn, and drove to Viola to make arrangements for a new home and to establish a weekly newspaper.

They were encouraged in this venture by the local townsmen, Nelt Burgor, C. F. Matthes, Jap Hull, Wm. Waggoner, Andrew Anderson, George Gerlach, George Tate, Abe Cushman, Al Guess and James Treseder. The above men lent their support 100 percent by their advertising and newspaper patronage.

Chas. Matthews offered a room over his drug store for the print shop and Al Guess moved the family into rooms over his blacksmith shop. The sum total of rent for both was \$5.00 per month.

The "Intelligencer", as the newspaper was called, was small to start, but it grew and soon became a permanent business in the little village. The following year, the editor, Clift Wells, passed on and his wife took on the task as editor of the paper. She carried on alone for four years, and then married John Frazier. The paper was known as the Frazier & Frazier Business but remained the "Intelligencer." The citizens of Viola and surrounding territory appreciated the paper, supporting it from year to year, and when the little newspaper outgrew its first quarters the family bought another building to house the printing press and also built a house to raise their family. The newspaper became a family affair as all hands worked to make it a success, and were proud of each edition when printed. The little paper is a monument they built with many hardships and struggles in the early years of the venture.

In 1911 Walter Van Winter bought out the paper and equipment and combined it with the Viola News that he was publishing at that time. He moved into the Intelligencer building and continued there for 26 years.

Although the Fraziers were out of the newspaper business, they retained an active interest in the affairs of our town. In time Mr. and Mrs. Frazier moved to Prairie du Chien where they again went into the publishing business, but their daughter, Mrs. Jack Loveless, or Hattie, as she was affectionately called by everyone far and near, remained in the village for many years and did much for the welfare of the people in this community. She worked with the Red Cross, gather-

ing food and clothing for those in need, and as Supervisor from our village she continuously worked in the interest of our people. She later worked in the Federal Relief Department and it was through her efforts that it was possible to get a W. P. A. project to build our community building. She was a member of the Children's Board of Richland County which was a big job at that time. Viola received their share of Federal supplies of food and clothing, hundreds of pounds of meat, rice, beans and other commodities which was given out to relief families without expense to our village. We also had a sewing room that furnished work for several women, the wages of which were paid by this relief agency. A number of our boys were located in C.C.C. Camps and received pay when they could find jobs no where else. Although all of this came through the Federal Government, without a capable person to see that it was distributed, it would not have been available to everyone, and this, Hattie did take care of.

Hattie was always a booster for everything worthwhile and ready with a helping hand to do her part. She now calls Richland Center her home, but still maintains a deep concern for the welfare of her former home town.

Probably no other man in the history of our town can boast of a more diversified line of business than Rollin F. Myers. The first four years after he came to Viola from Hillsboro he was in the general merchandise business in the Keach building. Then he became interested in farm implements and for twelve years he carried a well selected line of farm machinery which was a "town and country" binding factor. The fact that he maintained three warehouses on the Milwaukee Railroad right of way proves that he ran an extensive business. Later he branched out into the automobile sales and service business. Mr. Myers was one of the first to own cars in town. It was a one-cylinder "Brush" model, the height of fashion in that age back in 1909. Actually it can be said Mr. Myers is a true pioneer in the auto business in Viola. His garage was the largest in the Kickapoo valley and boasted the first curb service in high grade gasoline.

Mr. Myers was also a pioneer dealer in Cream separators and milking machines. He really believed in the future of Viola and its dairying community, and gave it his personal support and cooperation during the time that he was one of Viola's leading merchants.

Viola's Dairy Industries did their major expanding after 1920. Prior to this time, John Warner was the town's first buttermaker. He sold the business to a cooperative company with John Wunch holding the largest percent of the shares.

In 1914 Thiede Brothers and James Kerbaugh purchased the business and made ice cream as well as butter. The place was enlarged and within a short time the brothers, Ernest and Walter, bought out Mr. Kerbaugh's interest. In 1921 Walter became the entire owner of the Creamery. Since 1937 his son, Keith has been associated with him in the business.

The first creamery was a small one room frame building located where the present factory now stands. Thiede and Son have expanded several times, the building has been enlarged, a new modern milk cooling machine installed and other improvements have been made down through the years until it is up to date in every respect. In later years when they bought out the Granger factory, it has been converted to cheese making and more up to date machinery for that has been installed. Because of Walter Thiede's far sighted vision, he was able to anticipate the changes in the dairy industry and adjusted his business accordingly and at the same time maintain a steady and reliable market for the farmers milk and cream.

Walter gave freely of his time for the welfare of his home town and he was recognized as an authority on any question that pertained to municipal affairs. His jovial good nature won for him many friends.

After his death in 1950, his son Keith took over the entire management of the business and is carrying it on with the same sound policies as in the past. Keith, like his father, is lending a willing hand in all civic affairs, and his influence is a decided asset to our town.

Viola had different cheese factories in the past, and they have already been mentioned. But the one that eventually was bought by the Thiede Creamery, was on the lower end of Commercial street, not far from the bridge. It was operated by Clift Granger at the time it was sold to Thiede.

Mr. Granger formally bought the factory of E. D. Radell in 1926. The plant was built in 1914 by Al Watson and later sold to Theodore Shaffer, who in turn sold it to Mr. Fingerhote. The next transfer was to Mr. Radell.

When Mr. Granger obtained possession of the factory he stepped up the operating capacity, making it a greater community asset. He paid out \$60,000 to local farmers for milk the first year he operated his factory and made 280,000 pounds of cheese.

It was in 1939 that Walter Thiede purchased the machinery and equipment and worked it into his factory and made cheese part time.

In 1911 John Kirkpatrick and Son of Richland Center, built the cheese warehouse in Viola. Ed Lepley was its first manager. His reputation as a judge of good cheese made it easy for Kirkpatrick to choose him for the job. He was followed by Frank Mellom, who reported that the total amount of cheese handled in 1927 was 2,000,000 pounds, and the neat sum of \$440,000 was paid out for it.

At the present time, Dale Blakley is the manager and the warehouse employs several men. In 1951 the building was almost destroyed by fire, after it had been struck by lightning. There were 12 or 13 cars of cheese in storage at the time and the damage was estimated at over \$100,000. It was rebuilt that same year and made modern in every respect. It has a large refrigeration system and storage room as well as ample work room. For many years ice was used for the cooling. Viola is very fortunate in having this Cheese Storage facility as we are surrounded by many factories.

Besides the butter and cheese industries, our town also has had milk routes in the past. Looker Brothers had a dairy farm in the north end of the village and they delivered milk to the people around town. They later sold the route to Willard Martin and he in turn, disposed of it to Bill Williams, and the last time that milk was delivered, his son Russell was the official milk man. Since that time milk has been delivered into our village from outside dairies.

Viola had one more dairy industry that gave our town a boost. That was the Casein Factory that came in February of 1939 and located in what was the Tobacco Warehouse. It employed as high as 18 men and ran day and night. It was called the Rochester Button Factory, which worked on an experiment to make buttons from Casein, a by-product of whole milk. The casein was brought in from other areas as well as some of it being processed in the Viola Creamery. This factory remained about five years, but because the experiment proved not too satisfactory, it was moved out of town again. Although it was located here only a short time it brought a large pay roll to our local people as well as added business in many other ways.

H. L. Henthorn holds the distinction of being the oldest business man in Viola in terms of years spent as owner of one of the town's major establishments.

He was born in Sylvan township and came with his parents to our town in 1900. He started working for Schauer Brothers in their Hardware and Implement Store in 1907. The Shauers also carried furniture and had a Funeral Directory Service in addition.

In 1909 the Shauers decided to leave Viola and then sold their Furniture and Funeral Home to Harley and his brother Lester. They dissolved partnership three years later when Lester was appointed as Postmaster. About this same time Harley moved his business to the building now occupied by Keach's Market, but remained only a short time, going back to the original location, the Morris Buildng. In 1942 he bought the Commercial Hotel and remodeled it into an up to date Funeral Home. Since his son Vincent returned from service in World War II, he has been affiliated in the business with his father. They have developed a large second hand furniture business in a part of their building and also have a sales room for garden plants in season, as well as handling flowers and plants for special occasions.

H. L. Henthorn & Son have built up a reputation for themselves in the Mortuary and Funeral Service that is superior to that of much larger towns and Viola is proud to claim them as a part of its business family.

Harley and Vincent, as they are called by everyone far and near, give of their services far beyond the call of duty. Any job that is humanly possible, they will render for their fellowmen, besides the part they play in the civic affairs of our town. They have held offices on our village council and Business Men's Association. Also, both are members of our volunteer Fire Department and Harley is the only charter member remaining of the original crew. On special occasions when volunteer workers are needed, both men respond and give their time freely. Their contribution to Viola cannot be measured in words.

On New Year's Day of 1915, Wm. Webb of Viroqua came to town to invoice a stock of hardware for Claude Walters, who had sold it to Ed Hagen. But a few days later Mr. Webb bought the same hardware goods of Hagen and settled in Viola permanently to be one of the town's progressive business men. In 1916, he bought out the Groves and Cuff hardware stock and added it to what he did have and stayed in this business seven years, when he did a little trading with Virgil Bender and acquired the garage recently built. He later went into the General Merchandise trade by purchasing the stock of goods and store building of Chas. Marcus, who had been a successful merchant at this location for several years.

Perhaps a little journey into the past is in order to establish the location and refresh our memory of old landmarks. This building, that Mr. Webb started his merchandise career in, stood on a historical spot as far as our village is concerned, because it was on this ground that Cyrus Turner built his home which was the first one in Viola. He established a store, and kept postoffice in the same building. It was here, also, that the first school was taught and the first sermon preached. Down through the years, the Turner place has had many owners and business firms. Charlie Matthews bought the location in 1883 and proceeded to built the structure now owned by Mr. Webb. It passed through different hands, eventually being owned by Fred Morris, and then Chas. Marcus, who sold it in 1923 to the present owner.

Mr. Webb was a very keen business man with previous experience of dealing with the public and so his new venture became a growing element of Viola's retail center. He believed in advertising and clearance sales, and giving his customers advantage of his good wholesale buying. It not only was a financial success to himself, but a community asset for the benefit of all.

In 1935, he moved his stock of goods into the garage, which he had recently remodeled into a store building. He then rented the one he vacated to Art Terhune for a furniture store. Mr. Webb continued in his merchantile business in this new location for another ten years, using the same business principles and believing that what is good for Viola is also good for the store that bears his name.

It was in June of 1945 that he sold his stock of goods to Hugh Raether, a newcomer to our town. Mr. Raether has continued in a successful way to serve the community that he adopted as his own.

The story of Viola's first real department store, with cash girl and cash carriers to give it real color and prestige, would not be complete without going back in the past and bringing the facts up to date.

The story of its growth is filled with human interest and hard work, with financial battles lost and won. And through it all runs the courage and persistance of men who have accomplished much in the expanding of its merchandising service as an integral part of this community center.

It was in 1911 that Barclay Bros. erected the present home, a structure 58x84 feet in which the firm of Danforth, Keener and Edge installed its initial stock of goods. It was in 1913 that R. M. Ericson purchased the stock and became its proprietor, and in 1916 the Brindley and Walsh Company was incorporated with R. M. Ericson as President; F. M. Walsh, Vice Pres.; and L. J. Brindley, Secretary and Treasurer.

Two years later the war broke out and brought R. M. Ericson back again as sole owner, for Mr. Brindley entered the service in April of 1918 and in September of the same year Mr. Walsh followed him. At the close of the war, Mr. Brindley was fortunate to return, but his former partner had succumbed to Spanish Influenza in an Army Camp.

In 1919, an organization called Brindley and Kanable Company was formed. Those interested in this venture were, Edith Schroeder, Mrs. Hattie Loveless, Basil Kanable and Loren Brindley.

Again in 1925, it was reorganized under the corporation name of Kickapoo Valley Supply Company. Under this set-up, Mr. Ericson was President, L. S. Griffin, Vice President and Mr. Brindley, Secretary and Treasurer. Mr. Brindley as manager, had been connected with the store for 12 years with the exception of the time he spent in the service of his country.

The store's five main departments were groceries, dry goods, and notions, men's furnishing and ladies ready to wear, and shoes for the entire family. It also carried a five and dime variety section, a china-ware department, as well as a luggage section.

A great loss was suffered by the store in 1921, when it was entered one night and robbed of over \$4,000 worth of men's suits and many yards of dress goods. Entry was made through the front door which had been broken in. Blood hounds were used to track the bandits but they had entered a car and made their escape, as the dogs could track them no further than the street. No trace of the stolen goods were ever found.

In 1930, the Kickapoo Valley Store moved from its original home to the building owned by Wm. Webb. It formerly was a garage but Mr. Webb had remodeled it to be used as a general store. The company later moved to a new location further up the street known now as the Morris building.

N. O. Wheeler came to Viola in the early part of 1900 and ran a livery business with his brother. Some time later he bought and operated a tonsorial parlor in the basement of the Shamrock building.

He was also a pioneer in the moving picture field, as he ventured into this business as early as 1912. In 1918, he bought the Bar-

ber Shop of West Fishel, who disposed of the business because of his health. Thirty-six years Norm spent in this same shop, serving his community long hours of the day and also opened many evenings for the convenience of his customers.

Not only did he spend long years at his trade in our village, but he also served it in many other ways. He was interested in music and it was through his encouragement that the Viola High School Band was organized. He gave much time to patriotic affairs during both World Wars in the different drives for War Funds and received a Citation for "Meritorious Service" in 1945. He was an avid sport fan and a loyal supporter for all athletic games in our village. As long as his health permitted he was always in attendance, especially at basketball games, as that was his favorite sport.

The Viola community is to be congratulated on having for years a specialized store in the jewelry line. The shop itself, had been run by the Calkins family continuously for forty or more years. Part of this time it was in charge of a son-in-law, P. C. Walters. H. C. Calkins was the pioneer of this business, and had the distinction of working at his trade from the time he was 15 years old. For over a half century he "tuned up" the watches of his patrons in and around Viola. He also did delicate repair work on all kinds of jewelry and other wares. He had great skill in gun repairing as well. After retiring from his business, his son Charley took over. He too, was noted for his painstaking and delicate repair work on watches and other jewelry. Others of the Calkins family have "served time" behind the wheels of this enterprise, namely; Will, Ace, Art and Howard, the last named was a grandson of the original owner. The shop was sold in 1947 to Wm. Buchanan and son Evan, who have been operating it since that time.

John Keach has been a member of our old line of business firms for twenty or more years. He came to Viola in 1931 and bought the Schroeder & Hills' Meat and Grocery Market. He has built up a large business that has stood the test of time. In 1951 he retired from business when he sold out to his son Jess. The business continues to be run under the name Keach's Market. Its location is an old landmark that has much history back of it. George Tate ran a General Store in a part of this building in the early years of our town. Other businesses were also located here, and the building has been added to and improved down through the years until it has attained its present size and state of improvement. John Keach has put much into the equipment as well as the building itself. John also was interested in the building and improving of his home town and has spent around 16 years on the Village Council.

Hugh Raether made his first appearance in our town in 1945, when he bought out Wm. Webb's General Store. In the past 10 years he and his wife have established themselves into the respect and admiration of the community, because of the interest they have shown to the different activities of the town and to the organizations in which they work.

In 1920, Ira Casperson came to Viola from Viroqua and took over the Kinder Ford Contract and ran a garage and gave general repair service in the building across from the Kinder Hardware store. Six years later he sold his garage equipment and stock to T. H. Mitchell and reserving his Ford Sales and Service contract, he moved to the cement block building north of the Farmers State Bank of Viola. He continued a few years in this capacity and later moved to Viroqua.

Oscar Wheeler, one of the town's most civic minded citizens and successful business men came to Viola in 1902 and engaged in the livery business with his brother, Norm. He continued in this work until he bought the Feed Store of C. H. Riley in 1910, which had formerly

been operating as a cooperative organization of local men. In 1913, Oscar built a new feed store to the north of the Shamrock building. Here he built up a huge business with the help of his sons, Allen, Earl and Bud, that required the expansion into more storage buildings. In 1939, he retired from active business because of poor health. He sold out to his sons, making a total of 29 years of continuous feed store operation. During this time, he gave of his time freely to all civic affairs that pertained to the welfare of the town in which he had great pride. It was to a great extent through his efforts that our village was most fortunate in having secured the W. P. A. project for the building of our beautiful Community Building. He acted in the capacity of Village President for several years and helped to steer our town through many municipal problems. He was a very active director in the State Bank of Viola, gave of his time freely in the business of helping direct the merger of the two banks. It was a great loss to Viola when he passed away in 1946.

His sons continued to expand the Feed and Seed business under the name Wheeler Bros. In 1945 they bought the large building recently vacated by the Rochester Button Company and moved into it, which, because of the three floors and elevator facilities made a more efficient building for the increased business that they had promoted. Their business expanded to New Lisbon, which Allen, the older son manages, and they also have a prospering feed store in La Farge.

Wheeler Bros. Feed Store is considered one of the outstanding businesses in this trade area and is also a great asset to our town.

Henry Clift purchased in 1922 the business and good will of the Viola Hardware Co. of George Downer, a firm started in 1917 by the Benn Brothers, George and Omer, and later sold to Mr. Downer. Jan. 1, 1923, Roy Smith, another local boy, joined Henry to make the partnership of Clift and Smith's Hardware Company. They also dealt in Heating and Plumbing and carried a good line of sporting goods as well.

In 1934 the firm dissolved a ten year partnership with Clift taking over the hardware business, and Smith the plumbing and heating.

Soon after this, Henry Clift bought the large cement block building erected by Barclay Brothers and put in a well stocked line of Hardware Goods which became an established business of better than thirty years of service to the community.

Roy Smith, the Heating and Plumbing man, is still in business with his son Keith as his associate.

In 1905, the Nuzum Lumber Company came into being as a corporation with a \$50,000 capital stock. It was a Kickapoo Valley project with Viola as headquarters. At that time it was known as the Nuzum-Hunter Lumber Company. Later Mr. Hunter severed his connection from the corporation and moved from Viola. Since that time, the yards have been operated entirely by the Nuzums with different managers down through the years. H. R. Creamer came to Viola in 1931 as manager for eight years. Gordon Wheeler succeeded him for a few years. Lester Heal has been in charge since he returned from World War II service. The company not only deals in lumber and other building supplies, but carry a large supply of coal. It is a great asset to our town to have a business of this kind in our midst.

Perhaps no other man in the history of Viola has had a more colorful career than C. F. Mathews. He was a son of a pioneer family that came to Wisconsin in 1861. His father was an herb doctor and his son always felt a keen interest in that profession, although he chose to become a druggist instead. His father died shortly after coming from Indiana and the widowed mother and seven children were faced with the hard problem of making a living. As soon as Charles was old

enough, he found a job in the village, which was about 2½ miles from his home. He walked it morning and night for several years. He was just 20 years old when he started working for W. J. Waggoner in his general store. He also worked for George Tate and John Cunningham.

In 1881 he formed a partnership with N. H. Burgor which lasted three years. In 1884 he embarked in business for himself. He later built the store building that is now occupied by Chub's Skelgas and Appliance store. Here he carried a stock of general merchandise in connection with his drugs. He also had one barber chair, and did shaving and hair cutting on the side. Many times he had a man lathered and ready for a shave when a customer would come in for groceries and when he came back to the job of shaving, the lather would have dried, and it would be necessary to start the proceedings over again. He also used this same barber chair to pull an occasional tooth.

He bought farmers' produce of all kinds, such as hides, poultry, butter and eggs, and handled machinery and farm wagons on the side. Eventually he disposed of the general merchandise business but kept the drug line. He built another store in 1907, beside the first one and here he and his son, Virgil, ran an up-to-date business for over twenty years. He had been a Registered Pharmacist since 1882 and he was therefore qualified to carry a complete line of drugs. C. F. as he was called by young and old, was a genial gentleman, conservative in his business and upright in all his dealings with friends and strangers alike. He was fair minded in civic affairs and when his counsel was sought, it was delivered straight from the shoulder. Men knew where he stood on any subject being discussed.

In 1898, the hamlet of Viola was incorporated as a Village and by unanimous vote of the citizens, he was chosen as the first President. For years, he remained on the Village Council, and also in many ways, he gave of his time to civic affairs.

As a past time and recreation from business duties, Mr. Matthews operated his truck farm which laid on the slopes of Mt. Nebo and joined the outskirts of the village. He also owned one of the largest ginseng gardens in Wisconsin.

My earliest remembrances of C. F. were as I saw him many times, a slim bodied man, straight and dignified, walking with a hoe over his shoulder, from his drug store, up the main street, to his garden. He was a venerable figure, if ever there was one, the face adorned by a long white flowing beard and his head crowned with a tall stove pipe hat. The first hat of this kind that he owned, was won on an election bet with a salesman. He had the privilege of choosing the style, and this he did, and wore it as a dare at first, but later, becoming accustomed to the style, he continued buying the same type, until he became entirely associated with it in later years.

Mr. Mathews had strong political convictions along the Republican line and was a good friend of Bob LaFollett, Sr., before and during the time the latter was Governor of Wisconsin, and at one time, was called to Madison and was offered a political appointment, but C. F. was too tied up in his own business to accept a political job.

To some people, he may have appeared austere and solemn, for he did no idle talking, but he was well read on many subjects and he would converse at will, when lead into conversation with those who asked his opinion. His far reaching vision lead him into many worth while ventures.

He had a hobby of collecting relics left by Indians and Mound Builders. At the time of his death he had accumulated a valuable assortment of relics that could not be duplicated by anyone in the state.

When he and his son, Virgil, sold their Corner Drug Store in



#### C. F. MATHEWS IN HIS GINSENG GARDEN

1928, he retired from active work and led a more or less quiet life until his death in 1935.

His wife, the former Alice Lepley, owed and operated a Millinery Shop for many years, in which her daughter-in-law, Opal, continued until 1929 when she sold out to Nellie Miller, of Readstown.

The beautiful Viola cemetery has a small wooded area just inside the gate where every year, people from far and near, gather on Memorial Day, to pay homage to their loved ones. It is to Chas. F. Mathews that we owe a great deal of gratitude, because through his respect and his interest for his neighbors and friends gone on before, it lead him to plot out the ground, mow the grass, plant the grove of trees, and otherwise beautify the resting place of loved ones.

Since that time, other loyal citizens and organizations have been

contributing to the work of beautifying this hallowed resting place. In 1918, the Ohiyesa Club of the Methodist Church worked faithfully for months, earning money in various ways, to have a large flowing fountain installed in the wooded part of the cemetery. Many more trees and shrubs have been added and the faithful and painstaking care that has Sexton, Guy Benn, gives to the upkeep of this memorial ground contributes much to its beauty and speaks well for the civic pride of the village as a whole, and especially for the individuals who have carried on the work, started by Mr. Mathews.

The area in the vicinity of Viola was so well adapted to mink raising that Schroeder Bros., who had already had considerable experience in this industry, decided to locate at this point. They bought the Sommars farm in 1938, which lies at the extreme south edge of the village and started with 250 breeder mink. Since that time they have expanded into a major operation, having at the present time, 1,000 breeders, and when at full capacity, there are around 5,000, including the young mink. They have many types and colors of Natural Darks, Pastels, Silverblues, Sapphires, Whites, Alutians and Topaz. During the pelting season, which comes during November and December, they have from 15 to 17 helpers. The remainder of the year they employ four men to help feed and care for the mink.

After the pelting season, the skins are taken to New York City where they are graded and sold to the highest bidder.

Charles Stormont, another successful mink raiser, started in this business prior to World War II. He located his mink ranch on the slope of Mt. Nebo, the land which at one time was owned by his grandfather, C. F. Mathews, and was formerly used as a ginseng garden and truck farm. While Charles was gone in the service of his country, his step-father, Clyde Grear, and his sister-in-law, Mrs. Clyde Stormont, Jr., operated the ranch and cared for the mink. Since Charles' return from the service he has greatly expanded the industry by introducing other colors and types. He has at the peak time around 4,000 mink, including the breeders.

Horse meat used to be the staple meat product in the diet for feeding mink, but the scarcity of horses forced them into turning to other foods such as ocean fish, of which Charles used 100 tons a year. Whale meat also is used as the red meat portion of the diet. It comes in refrigerated trucks from the east and west coasts and arrives in this country from Norway, by way of refrigerated boats. There is also a great amount of cereals used in the diet which comes mostly from Kellogg's of Battle Creek, Michigan.

The details of killing and pelting, as well as the care and grading of the skins, is a story in itself in the mink industry and the two successful ranch owners in our village area know the answers because of their persistent efforts and labor to produce the best in this particular business. Viola is proud to own both Clyde Schroeder and Charles Stormont, as successful young men of great ability in this particular field.

The state of Wisconsin is said to produce 35% of all the furs in the United States and it can be safely said that a very large percent of this amount is raised in the Kickapoo Valley with our area coming in for a large share of the credit.

At the present time, Charles Stormont is venturing out into a new expansion, that of moving some of his breeders to a location on the West Coast. If this proves successful, he no doubt will continue to enlarge his western industry.

One of our young and successful business men started his career in 1922 in the pop corn business. Now Wm. Hall is Viola's Ford car and

Implement dealer, with a full and complete line of service and repair facilities.

In 1928, Jim Harris built a service station on the grounds where Waggoner's former store stood before it was destroyed by fire in 1925. In 1929, Wm. Hall, or Bill, as he is called by everyone, bought this station and in 1935, completely remodeled it into a large service station, selling Standard Oil Products, as well as tires.

He further branched out in 1943 by buying the garage, on the south side of the street, belonging to Guy Brown. He had already acquired the Ford Agency in 1935, which this new location made further expansion possible. His next move was to lease of Grover Deets, the large building in the next block west, in which he carries a large line of Ford Implements.

Bill has gone a long way since the Pop Corn days in 1922 and he can safely claim the right to be included in the list of progressive business firms, as well as belonging to the present generation of active firms.

Owing to the fact that Viola is surrounded by fertile farms and the hillsides being well adapted to good grazing, there has always been a good livestock business in town. There were several dealers but Jap Hull and his son were the principle ones until 1925 or later. Geo. Milum, E. B. Bender, Chas. Hall, James Matthes and E. E. Van Fleet, all owned farms and much of their land was devoted to grass fattening of both cattle and sheep, which were then shipped to market in the fall or sold to out of state feeders for further finishing in dry lots. Many times in the fall, a special train was run from Viola alone to accomodate the heavy runs of livestock. Monday and Tuesday were stock days and often the streets would be blocked with wagons loaded with hogs or sheep, waiting their turn at the scales for weighing. During the year of 1913, over two hundred cars of livestock were shipped from Viola.

Since the railroad was taken from the valley, all livestock is moved rapidly by trucks into Viola and out again, to the different markets with very little delay.

A Shipping Association was formed in 1925. Fred Matthes also began buying about this time, so Viola became more than ever, a booming livestock center. 225 to 230 cars of stock were shipped from this station during 1926 and 23 carloads in for pasturing. Fred Matthes became the only full time buyer after the Equity discontinued their buying at this station.

After the railroad removed their yards, Matthes rebuilt them, cementing all the pens and enclosing them, making them waterproof. The yards were enlarged 84 feet in 1947 with new and modern scales installed. Much livestock passes through the yards the first five days of the week and because of the use of trucks, the Viola Market draws from a much larger area than back in the old horse and wagon days. The livestock is moved out much faster by large semi-trucks that are operated by the Friday Transfer Line. There is no way of estimating the amount of stock that goes through the yards from the local areas as much business is relayed through these yards from other towns and their surrounding territory.

Fred G. Matthes, the oldest member of the firm of Matthes Yards, has taken an active part in the affairs of the village since 1926 when he was elected on the Board of Directors of the State Bank of Viola. He was later made President and served in that capacity during the merger of our two banks. Since that time he has served continuously as Director, and in late years, as Vice President of the Farmers State Bank. Fred also has been on the Village Council since 1927 until last election time, with the exception of one year, making a total of 27 years of loyal service to his town.

During the war, when help was scarce, the stock yards were operated without much help by Fred and his daughter, Naomi, but since that time they have purchased several small trucks of their own and employ four men besides the members of the firm.

Fred and Dewey Matthes, the senior members of this Livestock Company, received their education in this line from an experienced teacher who acquired his knowledge the hard way. Their father, James Matthes, dealt in livestock in various ways all his life time. Much of his experience was in the buying and selling for pasturing purposes, but he learned the true value of all types of animals by the trial and error method and this lesson he passed on to his sons who have profited much by his teaching.

The business firm, "The Matthes Farms", still operate their acres of grazing land as it has been done in the past, but since 1925, have been active dealers at the Stock Yards. The firm has acquired three junior members since 1945, when Sydney, Fred's son, and the two son-in-laws, Ed Baker and LeRoy Sanford, joined forces with the others, to take care of the volume of business that has been built up in recent years. They also buy wool in season and the past year, 70,000 pounds were bought at this place.

Gribble's Restaurant has long been a familiar landmark and a favorite meeting place of young and old. Before Dick and Claude bought out their parents in 1908, it was a popular eating place for the town. The brothers worked together for 28 years as an efficient team until death claimed Claude in 1936.

The Izaak Walton League was one of Claude's life's interests as he was much concerned about wildlife and its preservation.

Dick continued operating the restaurant alone until 1944 when he sold out to Mrs. Hannah Kotthaus.

M. P. Melvin, a progressive business man, joined the ranks of our village firms when he purchased the general store of the Kickapoo Valley Supply Co. in 1938. He specialized in groceries and operated it on the principle of a super market. He later opened up a bakery in the rooms next door, which he then sold to his brother, Ted, in 1945. The next year he opened up an Electric Appliance Store in the building next to the Viola News office and put in a line of refrigerators and stoves. In 1946, Lloyd Morris bought out the super market and two years later he bought the building as well. Since that time, Mr. Morris has played a part in the affairs of our town as a wide-awake business man.

In 1948, Mr. Melvin bought a lot further down the street and built a fire proof building to accomodate his Appliance business and added a Farm Implement line, afterwards, purchasing the John Deere dealership from the Soldiers Grove Implement Co. and moving the stock of goods to Viola. A few years later he disposed of his stock of goods and now is in business in La Farge.

The Standard Oil Co. chose Viola in which to locate a large bulk plant in 1950. It has a storage capacity of 18,000 gallons of gasoline. There are also two 10,000 gallon tanks that hold fuel oil and other by-products. They secured the services of Norman Bergum as distributor for their plant here. He is a very worth-while addition to our village because of his civic interest in the affairs of the town.

Ed Hagenah came to Viola in 1945 to buy logs and operate a saw mill. He branched out by making stocks for bowling pins in the rough, then later, added machinery whereby they could be finished. A new building to house the dry kiln and other machinery was built, the whole improvement was a \$20,000 investment. Over twelve men were employed with the output of 100,000 pins a year. In 1948, Hagenah sold

the factory to the Columbian Pin Co. of Los Angeles, California, and the business continues to operate at the present time with Ted Lepley as manager.

A few business places need mentioning lest they be forgotten in the years to come. They fill a gap in the history of our town and they deserve favorable comment because of the enterprising men who operated them. The first to mention of these businesses is the Perfect Oil Company's station. Perhaps no station in the valley had a more ideal location. It was located in the triangle formed by the junction of state Highways 56 and what is now No. 131, with the Sloulin Building as its apex. The station is easy of access from either road and the motorist pulled up under a canopy free from passing traffic. It was built in 1925 and operated by R. E. Drake, a native of our locality all his life. Later, when the Sloulin building was torn down, the station was also removed to allow room for the building of the present Mobil Station.

The Viola Service Meat Market originally operated in the building occupied as a tavern, on the south side of the business street. In 1925, C. C. Core & Co. bought it from C. A. Calkins. They later bought the building across the street and moved their market there.

Dave Landphier came to town in 1925 and opened an auto repair service in the rear of the garage owned at the present time by Bill Hall. His business drew trade from a wide area beyond the regular territory usually recognized as belonging to Viola.

In 1927, F. C. Daub moved to our village from Eau Claire and opened up a Tire Shop. He not only carried a full line of tires but gave tire service to all, and was the idol of every kid for miles around because of his branch in bicycle tube repairing. He was a real home town booster.

Our business directory is not complete without some mention being made of the Mound Park Store which serves a community need of people in its own area. Thad Kendall built the first store. In it he carried a line of groceries and a small stock of dry goods. He had a dance hall overhead and at times, when shows came to town, this hall was used for this kind of entertainment. The C. J. Danforth family bought the store in the early 1900's. Later, the Schroeder Bros. operated a General store. Down through the years the following were the proprietors at different times: Fred Lepley, Buford Seeley, Ross Bender, Charles Calkins, W. P. Hudson, Chas. Marcus, Glen Walter, Mr. Shinoes, the Gabrielsons and Arthur Kotel as the present owner. The last named has done much to increase trade and has added to his stock of goods.

Across the street from the store is the Matthes Oil Station, known as the DX. Clarence Matthes purchased a building from Henry Benn, moved in and remodeled it into a Filling Station. Don Devore has purchased the garage building recently built by Matthes and is using it for a Dolly Madison Co. Depot, from which he delivers pasteurized milk products to the people of Viola, LaFarge and other communities.

There are several other young business men who are now at the helm of the ship which depends so much on the future of our town. Each one in his own affairs and civic efforts, are doing a good job, in spite of the tremendous pull toward cities and large business.

We wish to make a special mention of these men and their loyalties to our village. Dan Lloyd and Burdette Kellogg have successful machine shops and take care of the repairs of all machinery in the surrounding area.

Denver Heal and Dyle Kanable, as operators of the Mobile and Standard Oil Stations respectively, are progressive and civic minded young men.

Lloyd L. Morris has a complete line of groceries and a meat

counter that he has operated since he bought out M. P. Melvin in 1948.

Floyd Griffin is owner and publisher of our weekly newspaper, the Viola News, which he purchased of Jack Vermuel in 1951.

Chas. Harris, or better known as "Chub" to the whole town, is owner of a successful Skelgas Service and Appliance Store, where he displays a full line of household appliances and includes radios and television sets in his business. He is always ready to give service at all times and freely gives his time to civic affairs.

Gordon Wheeler and wife now own the Corner Drug Store a familiar land mark and business corner since early days. They purchased the store from Mr. Erickson after Gordon returned from service in 1945.

The Cozy Cafe is owned and successfully operated by Mrs. Helen Bender and the Main Cafe has as its proprietors, Mr. and Mrs. Claire Winchell, who recently came to Viola and bought out Louie Danielson in 1954.

Guy Friday and Son operate a large Transfer Line that includes several semi trucks that haul livestock, feed, coal, and do long hauling of other merchandise.

Guy Brown is a farm owner and operates a truck line as well, doing contract hauling.

A new business family recently adopted our town. They are C. E. Hodgin and son-in-law, Clair Nietert, who bought the Clift Hardware line in 1954. We hope they will make Viola their permanent home as they are wide-awake business men who we feel, will be an asset to Viola.

The two taverns in Viola are operated by John Curtis and Carl Kotthaus, both of whom are civic minded and are always ready to lend a hand to help promote civic interests.

Ellis Mansfield operates the former Wheeler Barber Shop in the building that has been used in this capacity for 51 years. It was operated for years by Wes Fishel who later sold out to N. O. Wheeler in 1918.

This concludes the list of business firms, both past and present, up to the close of the 100 years of the history of our village.

Although Ed Hill was not one of Viola's business men, he deserves special mention because of his keen interest in the civic affairs about him. He was born in England in 1867 and came to America in 1898. He worked on different farms, then eventually bought what was known as the Dobson farm. Here he made a home for his aged mother and then he helped several of his nieces and nephews to come to America and kept them until they found homes of their own. In 1911 he and his mother moved to Viola. From that time, he took an active interest in the affairs of the village. One of the things he accomplished was to organize the Farmers State Bank. He carried stock in the venture and was an officer in the bank from its beginning.

He was a great lover of nature and took a keen interest in conservation of birds and wild flowers. The Izaak Walton League was one of his heart's interests and a familiar sight from fall to spring was Ed with a sack of grain over his shoulder, making his daily trip to the feeding grounds, east of town, which had been declared a game refuge. He had many flowers in his house as well as the yard and no flowers bloomed more profusely than those which Ed cared for.

He left a beautiful memorial for our village when he bought and gave the ground for a small park which surrounds our Community building in the center of town. He dedicated this to the memory of his mother and other pioneering mothers of our vicinity. After his death, one friend said of him, "We have lost a good man and a good citizen, if more men were like him, the world would be a better place to live in". His death occurred December 14, 1941.

## CHAPTER XII

### World War I

War clouds appeared on the horizon early in 1916. The first rumbling came from the Mexican border. When the Wisconsin National Guards began to be enlarged Co. K was formed. Two of our local boys enlisted. They were Justin Dake and Basil Kanable. They soon landed on the Mexican border and remained there a few months. Both boys were later promoted to Sergeants. As the war from the European area became evident, the 3rd Regiment of the Wisconsin National Guard was called to duty and on June 7, 1917, word came that war had been declared with Germany. Boys left from Viola, one by one. Registration of all men of draft age was called for. Viola proved her patriotism by being the first to hold registration and report to the County Seat. Richland County was the first county to report to Washington, so Viola must have been the first in the U. S. to get a report in.

A local Red Cross unit was organized in the village on June 15, 1917. Mrs. Edgar Lepley was elected as Chairman. Rooms over the Brindley & Walsh store were used as the Red Cross sewing room. Here the women gathered to roll bandages, knit sweaters, socks and scarfs and do any other sewing necessary. Later, these work groups met in private homes after the close of the war. Hundreds of sweaters, socks, etc. were sent across the water to boys from our town.

There was also a Village Council of Defense organized, of which Mrs. Blanche Gore was Chairman. Women had to learn to cook without wheat flour and plan meatless meals in the following months during the war. Wheatless days were Mondays and Wednesdays and ones wheatless meal every day. Tuesday was meatless day with one meatless meal a day. Porkless day was Saturday and saving on sugar was greatly stressed. Coal was scarce because of transportation and labor at the mines, so every man was urged to cut at least one cord of wood. Places of business were closed on Mondays to conserve fuel.

A daylight Saving law was a National measure to make more working hours for all business. War Saving Stamps of 25 cents and \$5.00 denomination were issued and it was the duty of everyone to buy until it hurt. Everyone was required to buy Liberty Bonds regularly.

The first Income Tax was levied and all married men were asked to declare on incomes over \$2,000. and unmarried men must make out papers if their incomes exceeded \$1,000.

Word began coming in that some of our boys had arrived overseas and were in front line trenches, then the word that everyone feared, came to a few of the parents. Warren Hamilton died from sickness in a camp in the states before going overseas. Later word was received that his brother, Ole, was killed in action. Verne Milum was wounded by a sniper and Bruce Kanable was gassed and sent to a hospital and after recovering, was returned to the front lines. Justin Dake was wounded and later, after returning to the fighting area and just a few days prior to the close of the war, he made the supreme sacrifice.

On November 11, 1918, at 3:00 o'clock A. M., the happy word was reported in at Viola that the war was over. All the bells and whistles in town sounded the glad news. And at 11:00 A. M. the Armistice was officially signed. Then the celebration really broke loose. What rejoicing! All that next day and evening, people celebrated the great news. Bon fires were lit and dynamite charges were set off. A parade with the band playing and flags waving everywhere. Then it was not long before the boys began their trip homeward. Some of them arrived by Christmas, others remained overseas much longer. Pearly Joseph was the first local boy to receive his honorable discharge.

During the summer months of 1918 the dread disease called

Spanish Influenza, broke out in the army camps in this country. It had been raging in Europe before it appeared in the United States. This disease claimed five times more lives than were lost during the fighting in the war. Many local people fell victims to this epidemic and a few did not survive when pneumonia followed. Mrs. Anna Harn was the first to succumb and a few days later, Dr. C. J. Stormont, one of our local doctors, who was worn out in caring for so many influenza patients, died from a complication of pneumonia. Word was received from an army camp that Frank Walsh had passed away from the dread disease. The last half of 1918 were sad and anxious months, but when the Armistice was signed and the epidemic began to die down, it brought happiness back to the majority of the towns people and business once more settled back into its familiar groove.

#### World War I Roll of Honor

Lieut. Basil Kanable	Bernard Dowell
Lieut. Lester S. Griffin	Sgt. Raymond Rabbitt
Corp. Roy O. Smith	J. H. Foreman
Sgt. Justin Dake *	Corp. Ivan Swancutt
Floyd Fisher	Corp. Garret Deckert
Herschel Bold	Ab. Johnson
Frank Gore	Bert Blakley
Fay Hull	Ross Grim
Ralph Nuzum	David Braithwaite
Milton Croninger	Buford Fowell
Raymond McHone	John Randles
Oscar McKittrick	Hugh Hamilton
Orval Fazel	Earle Geddes
George Smith	Henry Hysel
Bert Fisher	Hugh Harris
Virgil Drake	John Harris
George Foreman	Alvin Ray Harris
Louis Smith	Lee H. Griffin
Lester Fazel	A. H. Anderson
Glea Watson	Basil Holcomb
Jesse Snearley	Lieut. Weber Smith
Aliah W. Jennings	Lieut. Verne Milum
Milo Jennings	Clyde Grear
Murl Muller	Will Hill
Earl Emery	Dan Lloyd
Robert Shepherd	Glen Lepley
Roland Micks	Glen Walter
Clark Rockwell	Sheldon Gochenaur
Fred Foreman	Eldred Dobson
Clint Benn	Len Rabbitt
Loren Brindley	Roy Sanford
Derward Lepley	Amos Schroeder
Pearly Joseph	Henry Rounds
Clive Ambrose	Emmett Fazel
Hobe Dowell	Dr. George Parke
Ray Looker	 <b>S. A. T. C.</b>
Ole Hamilton *	Eugene Cross
Carl Hamilton	Herbert Clift
Warren Hamilton *	Clarence Mullendore
Frank Walsh *	Dewey Matthes
Corp. Bruce Kanable	Theron Harn
George Hoffman	Cyrus Crouse
Virgil Dowell	Fred Hurless
Floyd Churchill	Newton Boggs
Clyde Bender	

## CHAPTER XIII WORLD WAR II

With war going on in Europe, the danger became more imminent every day that United States would be drawn into the conflict. Our country began making decided preparation for such an event by ordering a one year basic training. On October 16th, all young men between the ages of 21 and 35 were required to register for the draft. Boys began leaving for the army and citizens were asked to buy Government bonds. As more and more boys began filling our army camps, the need was apparent for some form of clean and wholesome recreation, so a United Service Organization was formed which became known all over the world as the U. S. O. Our village made a canvass for funds, with Charles Calkins as Chairman. Other drives for this fund occurred at different times, during the war that followed. Our Government called for a scrap aluminum drive, to gather enough old material to be worked up into needed war supplies, and in this drive, Viola helped out. In the meantime, war clouds were drawing nearer, and on December 7, 1941, it came, but from a different direction than anticipated, for Japan attacked our Naval Base at Pearl Harbor. The atrocity of this sneak attack threw our community into a frenzy of patriotism and our boys began enlisting and leaving for some form of military training. The civilians at home began feeling the pinch of war in many ways. A tire quota was ordered, sugar rationing began, and later in 1942, coffee and gasoline came under the list of articles that were hard to get and so were rationed. Passenger cars were frozen unless you could prove that it was for a national emergency. A Government ban of the manufacture of household Electric Appliances caused a scarcity of those articles until the close of the war.

National Daylight Saving was also ordered and everyone had to turn their clocks ahead one hour.

A first Aid Class under direction of the Red Cross, was organized with Dr. George Parke as instructor.

Federal Food Stamps came into operation and everyone used stamps in buying certain scarce foods.

A call for scrap rubber was made and five tons were weighed in at Viola. A scrap drive for iron and steel was made in October of 1942 and trucks were used to pick it up around the country and in the village. It was piled in the vacant lot by the Casein plant until the drive was completed, then was delivered to Richland Center. The total amount was fifteen tons.

Because fuel oil was being used in the war effort, it was rationed and this caused much maneuvering on the part of civilians to conserve heat, in order to make their fuel go farther.

Victory gardens were popular recreation all through the war and everyone that did not raise their own vegetables were not considered very patriotic.

A War Fund drive was made with C. A. Kotthaus on the Richland County side and N. O. Wheeler for Vernon County, as Chairmen. A total of \$630.00 was raised from the village.

For security purposes a practice Blackout was staged. If lights were used, all windows had to be completely covered to permit no light to show. When the signal was given all cars pulled to the curb and turned off their lights. The Blackout was a success as our town was in complete darkness, not even a glow from a cigarette could be seen.

For the entire duration, War Bonds were continuously being sold until the seventh, which was near the close of the war, and the last and final one, called the Victory Bond, was made after V. J. Day.

Viola always came across in these Bond drives in a patriotic way, as she did in all the other war efforts.

Other salvage drives were made, one of which, was of tin. Every housewife was asked to flatten all tin cans and turn them in. The women were also asked to save all the cooking fats not absolutely needed and turn those in for the use of making explosives, etc. Many people made their own soap as that was a scarce article also.

The Red Cross was active in different ways during this war period. Much knitting was done with Mrs. O. E. Sikir in charge. There were different drives on also, the annual drive, as well as a few extra ones. Cakes, candy, fruit and cigarettes were sent to the hospitals at Camp McCoy and Tomah, for veterans. The local Red Cross sent as many as 78 people by school bus and donated cars to Madison, to give blood. Trips were made three different times for this purpose.

Meantime, while most of the reports from our soldier boys were reassuring that they were well and safe, there did come word that was not so good. The first report of tragedy came with the report of Burl Harris' death during the Fall of Corregidor. Burl Dull was reported killed in action on the aircraft carrier, Lexington, when it was sunk early in the war in the Pacific area. Ernest Hill, Jr., was also on this same ship, but managed to escape. He later lost his life on the carrier, Wasp. Other casualty reports kept coming in from both theatres of war. Some of our boys were taken prisoners, others reported missing. 1st Lieut. Roger Bernard, was reported missing in action over Germany. After Germany surrendered, Roger reported that he had been taken prisoner but was released and was returned home soon after. He had been a prisoner six months. He received the Distinguished Flying Cross and also, Air Medal, with three Oak Leaf Clusters for his service in the Air Corps.

Ernst Looker lost his life by drowning in a camp here in the states. Walter Blakley, who was in the Air Corps, lost his life in a flight over the English Channel. His rank was Technical Sergeant and was awarded the Distinguished Unit Badge and Air Medal with two clusters.

Herman Foreman, in the Infantry, was killed in action in Germany and awarded the Purple Heart. Burl Harris was taken prisoner in the Philippines and died in a prison camp. Lawrence Grim also died in a Philippine prison camp. Clyde Smith served in the European theatre and was killed in action in Sicily July 20, 1943. Delbert Benson lost his life in the fighting near Okinawa in the last months of the war. He had earned eight stars.

When word came that Germany had surrendered unconditionally May 8, 1945, the town was overjoyed and celebrated the good news by flying flags and blowing whistles. The church doors were opened for prayer all that day and Union Thanksgiving services were held in the United Brethren church. There also was a program given by the schools at the Community building.

Victory over Japan came a few months later on August 16, 1945. Again there was wild rejoicing. Plans were made for a great V. J. Day as soon as it was proclaimed by President Truman. The school band marched in full dress and a program was held in the Community building. It was a happy day for many parents for they had great hopes of having their sons home with them soon.



## ROLL OF HONOR, WORLD WAR II

One by one, those who were fortunate to be spared, returned to their homes and immediately took up their civilian duties once more.

Delbert Benson, Seaman 1/c	Staff Sgt. Douglas Cornell
Tech. Sgt. Walter Blakley	Corp. Richard Cornell
Burl Dull, Carpenter's Mate 2/c	Bernal Coy
Pfc. Herman Foreman	Seaman 1/c Charles Dettman
Burl Harris, Tech. 5th Grade	Pfc. James DeWitt
Ernest Hill, Jr., Seaman 1/c	Wayne Dolan
Howard Kondow, Tech. 5th Grade	Pvt. Lloyd DeWitt
Ernest Looker	Lieut. Robert Dobson
Pfc. Clyde Smith	Pfc. Pearley Drake
Bernard Adams, Tech. 4th Grade	Seaman 1/c Warren Dull
Sgt. Virgil Adams	Tech. 5th Grade Robert Dunbar
Wm. Alexander	Corp. Wm. Dunbar
Corp. Kenneth Allen	Pfc. Harold Egge
Priv. Wayne Allen	Seaman 1/c Keith Elliott
Clift Ames, Electricians Mate 2/c	Staff Sgt. John Ewing
Carol Anderson	Pfc. Ernest Elliott
Corp. Paul Anderson	Corp. Robert Farrell
Sgt. Robert Anderson	Tech. 4th Grade Chas. Ferguson
Wm. Anderson	Com. Warrant Officer Verl Fetty
Corp. Corlis Armstrong	Fireman 1/c Maynard Fink
Lieut. Edward Baker	Fire Controlman Wilmer Fink
Byron Bender	Pfc. Arthur Fish
Robert Bender	Tech. 3rd Grade Odin Fink
Theodore Bender	Eldon Fish
Staff Sgt. Dean Bennett	Pfc. Alfred Fosdal
Sgt. Leslie Benson	Major George Fowell
Pvt. Ralph Benson	Harold Fish
Corp. Joseph Benson	Sgt. Don Friday
1st Lieut. Roger Bernard	Wm. Fruit
Pfc. Basil Blakley	Tech 5th Grade Virgil Frye
Geo. Blakley, Tech. 4th Grade	Tech 5th Grade Victor Frye
Richard Blakley, Tech 4th Grade	Earl Gilman
Gorman Braithwaite, Petty O. 1/c	Pfc. Arthur Glick
Pvt. Mike Braithwaite	Staff Sgt. Merald Glick
Staff Sgt. Charles Braithwaite	Pfc. Gordon Glick
Master Sgt. Glow Briggs	Mach. Mate Marcel Gochenaur
Sgt. Roland Briggs	Pfc. Floyd Griffin
James Brooks	1st Lieut. Ralph Gribble
Seaman 1/c Robert Brown	Chief Mach. Mate Gail Guist
Staff Sgt. Charles Buchanan	Corp. Lavon Guist
Boatswain 2/c Reginald Buchanan	Tech. 5th Grade Lawrence Hadley
Staff Sgt. David Buchanan	Sgt. Paul Hadley
Corp. Lyonal Buck	Pfc. Kenneth Hadley
Mach. Mate 1/c Rex Bufton	Bob Hagen
Sgt. Vere Bufton	Corp. Laddie Halink
Charles Campbell	Staff Sgt. Burl Hall
Avi. Ord. 3/c Willis Carmack	Pvt. Dan Hale
Pfc. Alfred Croninger	Corp. George Hall
Seaman 1/c Ivan Chadwick	Tech. Sgt. Clyde Hamilton
App. Seaman Kenneth Chadwick	Elmer Hamilton
Pfc. Nick Cina	Bernard Hankins
Tech. 4th Grade Ed Clark	Staff Sgt. Theron Harn
Sgt. Earl Clift	Ray Hankins
Sgt. Dick Clift	Pfc. Leslie Harnden
Tech. 4th Grade Virgil Clift	Tech. Sgt. Burl Hamilton

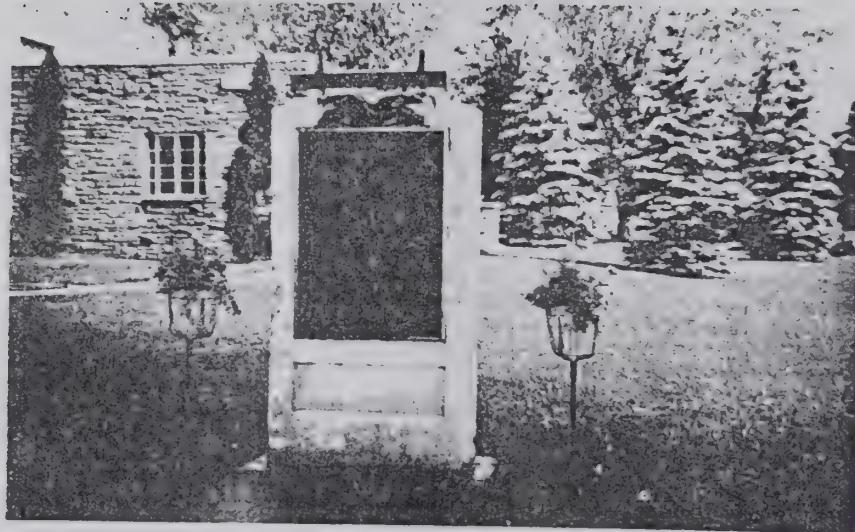
(World War II Honor Roll Continued)

Charles Harris	Pvt. Stanley Muller
Pfc. Hilmer Harris	Corp. Bernard Nicks
Staff Sgt. Leon Harris	Pearl Oliver, Jr.
Tech. Sgt. Avery Hartley	Dallas Oliver
Seaman 1/c Kenneth Hartley	Elec. Mate 1/c Melvin Olson
Staff Sgt. Leon Haugh	Lt. Com. George Parke, Jr.
Corp. Leslie Hartley	Billy Pellett
Staff Sgt. Wayne Hayes	Coxswain Myron Pellett
Tech. 5th Grade Ray Hayter	Staff Sgt. Paul Pellett
Tech. 3rd Grade Vincent Henthorn	2nd Lieut. Vernon Pellett
Sgt. Clifford Henthorn	Corp. Daniel Peltier
Sgt. Lester Heal	Gerald Perkins
Seaman 1/c Henry Hill	Staff Sgt. Frank Perry
John Hunter	Service Man 2/c Walter Phillips
Staff Sgt. John Hough	Floyd Perkins
Lt. Col. Kenneth Hough	Mach. Mate 3/c Lester Perry
Seaman 2/c Clyde Hough	Corp. Lowell Phillips
Pharmacist 1/c Leon Hunter	Bernard Queen
Virgil Johnson	James Queen
Pfc. Ralph Johnson	2nd Lieut. Carroll Raether
Seaman 2/c George Jones	Sgt. Gerald Raether
Cpl. John Jones	Tech. 5th Grade Virgil Radloff
Staff Sgt. Acel Joseph	Pvt. 1/c Ben Rastall
1st Lieut. Gerald Kanable	Pvt. 1/c Wayne Rockwell
Staff Sgt. Irvin Kaukl	Pfc. Brandon Rockwell
Master Sgt. Robert Kaukl	Pvt. Donald Salisbury
Capt. Lowell Keach	Tech. 5th Grade Virgil Salisbury
Corp. Kenneth Keach	Pfc. LeRoy Sanford
Corp. Paul Kinder	Pfc. Wm. Sanford
Edward Kotthaus	1st Lieut. Kenneth Savacool
Sgt. Alvin Larson	Sgt. Gerald Shilling
Staff Sgt. David Kintz	Pfc. Robert Schroeder
Staff Sgt. Robert Lawton	Pfc. Pershing Shuckhart
Seaman 1/c Barnal Lepley	Seaman 1/c Raymond Sime
Phar. Mate 1/c Derward Lepley	Sgt. Donald Smith
Sgt. Donald Lepley	Pfc. Floyd Smith
Mach. Mate 2/c Fred Lepley	Water Tender 3/c George Smith
Chief Ship Fitter Harvey Lepley	Pfc. Herman Smith
Coxswain Larry Lepley	Carpenters Mate 3/c Lee C. Smith
Corp. Don Lester	1st Lieut. Grant Smith
Sgt. Delos Long	Carpenters Mate 3/c Merlin Slaback
Staff Sgt. Leonard Longmire	Staff Sgt. Raymond Smith
Wayne Mahan	Corp. Robert Starratt
Sgt. James Looker	Henry Storer
Staff Sgt. Justin Matthes	Elec. Mate 3/c Rex Smith
Sgt. Sydney Matthes	Capt. Herman Storer
Staff Sgt. Lawrence Martin	Sgt. Herbert Stone
Edward Marquardt	1st Lieut. Chas. Stormont
Sgt. Clarence McCollough	Elmer Stone
Ships Cook 2/c Tom McCollough	Lieut. Clyde Stormont
Tech 5th Grade Ed McCollough	Signalman 3/c Harold Strine
Pvt. James McGrath, Jr.	1st Lieut. Vernon Stuck
Pvt. Grove McKinney	Pfc. Kenneth Sutherland
Joseph Meboe, M. D.	Seaman 1/c Cecil Sutherland
Sgt. Mervin McKittrick	Pvt. Elmer Sutherland
Corp. Carrol Miller	Pfc. Fred Thompson
Radioman 3/c Gilfred Miller	1st Lieut. Jack Vermuel
Raymond Moody	Sgt. Ernest Vodak

(World War II Honor Roll Continued)

Corp. Fred Vodak  
Corp. Verlin Walker  
Corp. Delburn Walter  
Pfc. Elvert Walter  
Laurel Volden  
Ships Cook 3/c Douglas Volden  
Pfc. Mark Walter  
Staff Sgt. Delbert Wanless  
Corp. Paul Wanless  
Corp. Arlis Wanless  
Tech. 4th Grade Frank Warren  
Corp. Gordon Wheeler  
George Wilder  
Burl Wheeler  
Robert Wilder  
Tech. 4th Grade Geo. Williams  
Sgt. Justin Williams  
Capt. Dansy Williams  
Motor Mach. Merwin Williams  
Sgt. Ernest Williams  
Corp. Vernon Williams  
M. M. M. 3/c James Winter  
Allen Croninger  
Wm. Ericson  
Tech. 5th Grade Ernest Wood  
Eldon Walker  
Pfc. Gerald Anderson  
Pvt. Dyle Kanable  
Tech. 4th Grade Glen Miller  
Corp. Gus Piasecke  
Kenneth Vodak  
Sgt. Lawrence Sloulin  
Leonard Ambrose, Jr.  
Lynden Ambrose  
Ellery Anderson  
Dan Aupperle  
Leland Baxter, Jr.  
Irvin Bender, Jr.  
William Bennett  
Harlon Chaffee  
Grant Cooper  
Lavon Deiter  
Art Dettman  
Emmett Egge  
Vernon Emery  
Don Fries  
Robert Frye  
Darius Glick  
Elwood Gore  
Darrell Hankins  
Leon Hankins  
Arlin Harris  
Joseph Harris  
Denver Heal  
Nathan Higginbotham  
Tillman Hill  
Glen Johnson  
Leonard Johnson  
John Jones  
Leo Kanable  
Don Kerbaugh  
Owen Koch  
Rupert Koch  
Thomas Longmire  
George Marsh  
Melvin Mellom  
Theodore Melvin  
Kenley Muller  
Clifford Owen  
Lester Phillips  
Denver Powell  
Virgil Queen  
Marion Reed  
Robert Rizer  
Bernard Rumsey  
Ralph Runnings  
Robert Shireman  
Burdette Skrede  
Keith Spence  
Floyd Stoleson  
Alvin Thompson  
Gerald Thompson  
Leon Withrow  
Muriel (Withnell) Bender  
Staff Sgt. Gwendolyn Cochran  
Capt. Ellen Savacool  
1st Lieut. Mary Jane Schroeder  
Ensign Louise Smith Striebinger  
Staff Sgt. Leona Wilson  
Ella Ruth Hankins  
Alice Shepherd

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#### VETERAN'S HONOR ROLL PLAQUE

In 1948 Viola dedicated a Bronze Plaque on which were inscribed the names of 290 men and women who had served in World War II. Included are the names of ten men who made the supreme sacrifice. A memorial service was held in which Mrs. Alvia Harris, a Gold Star Mother, unveiled the plaque. Percy Piddington, Principal of the High School, gave an account of the work done by the American Legion in preparing the Honor Roll. The High School band played the National Anthem and in closing, Rev. Core gave a beautiful prayer. The Gold Star Mothers present were: Mrs. Ernest Hill, Mrs. Alvia Harris, Mrs. George Benson, Mrs. Florence Blakey and Ms. Frank Melichar.

It is most fitting that this plaque stands in the little park in the center of our village. In the summer, flowers are kept blooming in two large urns placed on either side of the Memorial Plaque.

At this time it is impossible to give the Honor Roll of those men who fought in the Korean War or served in the Armed Forces during this time. Paul McKittrick was Viola's only Korean War casualty.

Here on the home front in 1952 and part of 1953, Viola, situated as it is, on the air route between Chicago and Minneapolis, was selected as one of the 650 Air Raid posts in Wisconsin. This defense group was made up of volunteer workers who served two hour shifts, for the twenty-four hour period. The purpose was to spot airplanes and report into Minneapolis. This observation post was in charge of Jim Braithwaite, who saw to it that the post was filled all hours of day and night.

## CHAPTER XIV

### The Viola American Legion and Auxiliary

This history would not be complete without reviewing what Viola citizens, the American Legion and the Auxiliary have done to commemorate the lives of our loved ones who have gone on to the other life, that we may live in a free country.

Fifty enthusiastic Veterans met at the Community building in Viola October 24, 1945, to organize a Legion Post. Richland Center and Viroqua had Posts at that time and when the time came for the first officers to be installed, Paul Brock, Commander of the Richland Center Post, acted as Master of Ceremonies at the first meeting. The following officers were elected and installed by State Adjutant: G. H. Stordock, of Milwaukee: Commander, Kenneth Savacool; 1st Vice Commander, Ernest Kinder; 2nd Vice Commander, Glen Walter; Adjutant, Kenneth Keach; Finance Officer, A. B. Schroeder; Service Officer, Glen Lepley; Chaplain, James Looker; Historian, Cecil Jones; Sergeant at Arms, John Bolint and Virgil Radloff.

The Post was named, Hamilton-Harris Post No. 447 and had 110 members. Arrangements were made to meet twice a month, at the I. O. O. F. hall. The new organization was considered strong for the size of the village of Viola, and the members started at once to arrange social affairs that would interest the public in helping the work to go on, and to entertain the veterans who had been deprived of such entertainment when in the service.

The records show that the Post was represented at one of the National Conventions, by Adjutant Kenneth Keach, and that other members have attended the State Conventions as delegates. Invitations from the Richland Center Legion acquainted Viola members with the activities of other Posts.

From the time the Legion was organized, there was a hope that some time they might own their own home. Dances, card parties, dinners, entertainments, and other affairs helped the boys to see their dream come true. The members donated \$783.57 and public spirited citizens contributed \$786.23, making a total of \$1,560.80, to apply on a building. A committee was appointed to investigate a suitable location and the decision was made that the building known as the Guess Hotel, would be the new home. The property was owned by Edith and Mary Schroder when the Legion made the purchase for their home at a cost of \$2,500. Materials for the remodeling necessary amounted to \$2,225. and the labor costs were \$1,306.72, making the total cost, \$6,031.72.

Should the people in the Viola vicinity be proud of this organization? Yes, and when the Legion announces they are in need of help, it is the duty of everyone to lend a hand. The building had been remodeled, painted, and is a credit to the main street of the village. Their kitchen is complete and modern and the dining room, with chairs and tables, makes a convenient place to have banquets, such as the Auxiliary furnishes on patriotic days of the year.

The lodge room is spacious, light and clean, and the furnishings are a credit to the organization. The pictures of Ole Hamilton, killed in the first World War, and Burl Harris, who died in a prison camp in 1942, hang in the assembly room. At the entrance of the building is placed a bronze plaque, "Hamilton-Harris Post No. 447".

Walter Phillips is the present Commander. Other officers are: 1st Vice Commander, Edward Baker; 2nd Vice Commander, George Williams; Adjutant, LeRoy Sanford; Finance Officer, A. B. Schroeder; Chaplain, Rev. Gene W. Carlson; Historian, Clarence Mullendore; Sergeant at Arms, Don Devore; and Service Officer, Kenneth Keach.

Kenneth Savacool was the first Commander. Others who have filled that chair are Robert Dobson, Paul Kinder, Vincent Henthorn, Kenneth Keach, Ernest Kinder; Kenneth Hough, Roy Smith, and Eldred Clift.

Nine members have passed away since the organization of the Post. They are Myron Ewing, Gordon Glick, Clyde Mamilton, Hugh Harris, David Kintz, Dr. Geo. Parke, Cecil Sutherland and Jess Wilson.

The ladies began to arrange for organizing an American Legion Auxiliary in the summer of 1946 by gathering information and material from the Department of Wisconsin. On October 8, 1946, the Charter was sent. The first officers were as follows: President, Mrs. Bernice Schroeder; Vice President, Mrs. Alvina Keach; Treasurer, Mrs. Ramona Clift; Historian, Mrs. Janice Savacool; Chaplain, Mrs. Bonnie Buchanan; 1st Vice, Miss Betty Bender; 2nd Vice, Mrs. Ruth Tilley; and Sergeant at Arms, Mrs. Letha Sanford and Mrs. Muriel Bender.

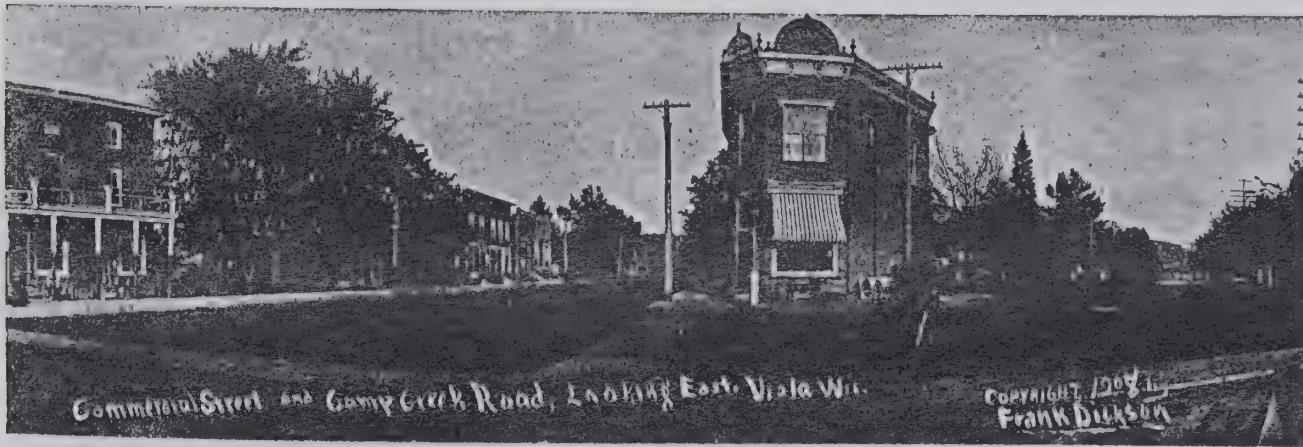
The Charter members were: Miss Viola Clift. Miss Dott Smith, Mrs. Jennie McGrath, Mrs. Mabel Fazel, Mrs. Ora Harris, Mrs. Geneva Schroeder, Mrs. Pearl Raether, Mrs. Marie Lepley, Zelma Bender, Mrs. Josie Henthorn, Mrs. Julia Melichar, Mrs. Helen Rockwell, Mrs. Florence Blakley, Mrs. Ruth Hamilton, Mrs. Lulu Joseph, Mrs. Alice Savacool, Mrs. Flora Giffin, Mrs. Beulah Smith, Mrs. Juanita Cina, Mrs. Bessie Keach, Mrs. Mattie Bernard, Mrs. Helen Mullendore, and Mrs. Mabel Smith.

On March 19, 1946, a meeting was called for the purpose of organizing the Legion Auxiliary. Kenneth Savacool, Post Commander, gave a brief talk. Bonnie Buchanan was nominated as Chairman. The officers were installed April 16, 1946 by District President, Mrs. Harley Hicks, of Dodgeville. August 27, 1946, twenty-seven candidates were initiated and the officers installed. Janis Savacool was elected President for 1947 and 1948, Muriel Bender for 1949, Bonnie Buchanan for 1950 and 1951, Louise Bender for 1952, and Elsie Parke for 1953 and 1954.

The number of members now totals sixty. The activities during the year have been as follows: money and gifts to needy veterans in the community, contributions to the March of Dimes, Cancer and Heart funds, Red Cross, Birthday Corner at the Veterans Hospital at Madison, Gift Shop at Wood, Armistice Day Treats, Christmas Cheer to Veterans, the sale of Poppies, observance of Patriotic Days, Pan-American Day, etc., attended Memorial Day and participated in Decoration Day activities, and purchased books for the Viola Public Library in memory of servicemen who were killed in the war.

The work that has been accomplished by these organizations is far beyond all anticipation. The American Legion and Auxiliary have a program of service to God, to their country, to the veterans and their families and to improve the community in which they live, so that America can demonstrate the value of the Democratic way of life. To have such organizations in Viola is, without question, most commendable to the veterans who organized and are still working to make their Post a credit to the community. The Post and Auxiliary work hand in hand, not only for the veterans, but for every civic improvement program.

Veterans of the Civil War, the Spanish American War, World War I, World War II and the Korean War, at home and abroad, took arms, gave their lives, many are in hospitals and will never be at home again, all to have the American people a free people, to have freedom of speech, worship as their conscience dictates, live with their loved ones, educate their children, and have a nation free from dictatorship. Let the American Flag wave, and our local organizations continue to prosper in their good works.



99

Commercial Street and Camp Creek Road, Looking East, Vista, Wis.

COPYRIGHT 1907  
FRANK DILKSEN

**COMMERCIAL STREET AND CAMP CREEK ROAD**

Looking East—Waggoner store at extreme left, Sloulin Building in the center. Picture taken in 1907

## MEMORIES

What we term as progress, has eliminated many things which fit together as a jig saw puzzle to give us a colorful picture of the past, that will live long in the memories of those who are old enough to recall these incidents. But those who did not have the privilege of seeing our village as it was fifty years ago, must depend on others to weave this picture in words which will not be adequate to fully describe it.

We need only to walk down Memory Lane to recall the old board walks that sagged here and there, with wide cracks between the boards, and many are the pennies, clutched tightly in little hands, that never reached their destination of the candy counter because they fell and rolled down the cracks to the dark chasms beneath.

I think I see in this memory picture, a little country girl, who went barefoot all week, but Saturday afternoon, being a great event, donned a shiny pair of shoes and a much ruffled dress, which were kept for only special occasions. With her week's allowance of five pennies, she accompanied her parents to town to do the week's shopping. Her mother, with a week's supply of eggs and a fancy print or two of butter, to exchange for some very necessary groceries, and father, proudly driving his prancing team, covered even to the ears, with colorful fly nets, hitched to a double surrey with the fancy fringe around the top. Their laps were well covered with a bright colored robe, to keep their dresses clean and free from horse hairs and flying mud.

If the day was fair and dry, clouds of dust heralded their coming down main street, but if it had chanced to rain, the muddy ruts were deep in the streets of our village. Father would tie his horses to a convenient hitching post that lined the street or in the hitching yards, in what is now the park surrounding the Community building. This hitching yard also furnished a watering trough and pump where farmers could water their horses before the trip homeward.

Let's take another trip at even'tide with past memory as our guide. Who is that tall, broad shouldered man, carrying a ladder? None other but Jacob Benn, the Village Marshall. You may ask, what is his task? Lighting the kerosene lamps that lined our village streets. One by one, he lights a tiny flame that gives to our little town a welcome glow. In comparison to the white way of our present times, those kerosene lamps gave but eerie shadows, but even so, Viola people were proud of their early municipal achievements, and rightly should be, for many articles written about our village gave them credit for being the most prosperous of the Kickapoo Valley.

Now let us follow Mr. Benn as he goes down the street. He comes to the last lights. There they are, hanging from the beams on either end of the old covered bridge that spans the Kickapoo into Mound Park. His task is done for the day, but when morning comes, the lamps all must be filled, the wicks trimmed and otherwise made ready for the night to come.

We need not go far back into the annals of history to recall two other men who kept law and order in our village and did the hundred and one tasks that fall on the shoulders of our village marshalls. John Smith served in this capacity for twenty years and the other one needs no introduction to most of the present generation, Peck Shilling, who is past 85 years of age, kept the wheels of the law oiled for fifteen years or more and spent many long hours of the night patrolling our streets, protecting the property of our citizens. He had only one arm but there was much strength in that one member and the hook that took the place of the other hand, served him well in emergencies that called for law enforcement. Both John and Peck had the respect of old and young and not many occasions came up that they were incapable of



JOHN BENDER AND HIS BRUSH AUTOMOBILE

handling. Mr. Shilling's misfortune, when the fire bell fell from its tower and caught him beneath it, resulting in one leg being badly injured, brought his services to our village to an abrupt end.

Claude Gribble was much admired for having the finest rig in town. It was called a rubber tired run-about of miniature size, to which he hitched his black and white Shetland pony. The white leather harness added much to the outfit. Its popularity soon waned, for shortly after this, Dr. Dake purchased the first automobile, that was owned by any citizen of this area. This was some time during 1908. Dr. Dake also had the distinction of owning the first motorcycle in town.

This car was no low sleek streamlined affair, such as our cars of the present day, but was built on wheels very similar to the high buggy wheels of that time. There were chains from the engine to the rear wheels and a lever was used for steering purposes. In spite of not having either top or doors, it was considered very modern and probably compared to the sport models of today, in ultra smartness.

Later, Ed Hill and John Bender bought cars, which were built on new lines. They were the first low wheeled cars put out and were both bright red in color. They were more powerful than Dr. Dake's because they had two cylinders instead of one. Hopewell Ridge was quite flattered in having two Brush cars in the community and as soon as the first cough animated from the hidden depths of either car, the neighbors rushed out to watch their friends dash by, hoping that the driver might stop and ask them to go for a ride.

About three years before the first automobile came to Viola, a carload of very venturesome folks from Kenosha, traveling to St. Paul, came through this area, and as there were no highway markings or sign



### VIOLA'S NEW COMMUNITY BUILDING

posts, they were confused as to the best route to follow. They came out Hopewell Ridge and when they came to the top of the Kanable hill, they were traveling pretty fast, and their brakes failed to hold, so their speed increased, and when the car struck a waterway it leaped thirty feet, made two complete somersaults. The occupants were all hurt quite badly and physicians were called to the scene and later, the injured were brought to Viola. Mr. Simmons, the owner of the car, a Kenosha millionaire, wired the President of our railroad, who immediately sent a special train to Viola to pick up the party and take them to a hospital in Chicago. The car was badly wrecked but it was sent back to the factory where it was rebuilt. The Simmons party all fully recovered from their accident.

The car that featured in this incident was probably the first ever seen by the majority of the people in this vicinity.

### THE OLD LANDMARKS

One by one, the old landmarks of Viola have been moved or remodeled or completely torn down. The Waggoner building, erected in 1866 by Cyrus Turner, was completely destroyed by fire in 1925. It had served the town well for almost sixty years.

The Brunswick Hotel was moved to a new location in 1909 and remodeled into a residence, in which Mr. and Mrs. John Renick live.

The Baldwin Harness Shop, built in 1870, which had in early years, been a part of George Tate's location, and served as a wagon shop, was removed to make way for the Community building. At the time it was wrecked, a pattern was found that had been used in making wooden yokes for oxen. On the west side of this old building, stood another landmark. It had been a restaurant, also a meat market, down though the years. It too, had to be wrecked to give way for progress when the Community building was built.

The Eric Sloulin building was removed in 1939 because it was an ideal location for a modern oil station, which was built by the Wadham's Co. The old printing office that had formerly been the home of Viola's first newspaper, the Intelligencer, also was sacrificed for this same oil station.

The old Huffman building at the extreme west end of Commercial Street was also removed in 1939, not because its location was need-

ed, but it no longer was safe for the public and had been condemned.

The old Cushman Grist Mill built in 1879, which stood near the old power house and the Mound Park bridge, was torn down in 1940. It was built of native pine with 16 inch square joists and all square nails were used in its construction.

It is hard to part with these old landmarks of pioneer days, but with progress ever on the march, they have to be sacrificed. It is the memory of these landmarks which were monuments left by our early pioneers that we are paying tribute to, when we celebrate the one hundredth birthday this year of the founding of our village and its surrounding community.

In January of 1943, fire destroyed our Village Fire Station and for this reason the Melvin building was purchased by the Village to house the new fire fighting equipment.

#### FLOODS

Many words have been used to describe the river that flows through our little village. One can get quite poetic when the river is on its good behavior, and call it a peaceful little stream, meandering its way here and there, down the valley, fish lurking in its ripples and eddys, and cows coming to its water's edge, refreshing themselves from the cool waters that are fed from the many springs that are found in the surrounding hills.

But there is another story to tell about this little river. It can and does become a raging torrent, and causes untold damage to farms in the lowlands bordering its banks and also to the villages through which it flows. One can expect at least one flood a year and that usually follows the spring thaws, but the three major floods that put our valley in the head lines of the daily papers, were more than little spring freshets. The first one of these, following three heavy rain storms, of cloud burst and cyclonic proportions, came on Sunday, July 21, 1907. Over ten inches of rain fell during the day. The wind, which came at about four-thirty o'clock in the afternoon, did the most damage on the Hopewell Ridge, where several barns were either totally damaged or blown from their foundations. Much timber was destroyed and great damage was done to crops in this section.

But the Kickapoo Valley, from head to foot, was the scene of disaster from the worst flood to ever occur in the history of the country.

Viola was warned by telephone from LaFarge about 4:30 A. M. on Monday, to look out for the worst flood as La Farge was all under water and the river was still rising. People in the lowlands were warned to vacate and to take all livestock to higher ground.

The first of the flood reached Viola early on Tuesday morning. Business men began moving their goods from the cellar to the first floor, but still higher came the water, and a second time the goods were moved, but even so, the merchants lost many dollars in damaged goods. The flood reached its crest at 11:30 A. M., which was checked at sixteen feet above low water mark. This was three feet higher than the previous flood of 1899.

At Maeby's Restaurant and the News Office, the buildings located where the Community building now stands, the water was sixteen inches deep on the floors. It came within two inches of running into the bank, which is now a part of the Curtis Tavern. A swift current of water ran the full length of the business street, three feet deep in places. The railroad bridge in town was washed out and train service was discontinued for over a month. There was no way of estimating the total damage done by wind and water.

After this major disaster, the river went along much as usual for several years, enjoying an occasional spring rampage of small proportions. But in 1935, the Kickapoo burst forth again, after a heavy all night storm, and broke all previous records by 12½ inches. A previous flood that had barely receded, had covered the valley lands and did some damage to growing crops and the river was still bank full when the heavy rains came. Never in the memory of the oldest inhabitant had the river risen so fast. The water rose an inch every minute until the flood waters reached an all time high. The water came in a strong current down the business street and water was six inches deep in the postoffice, which at that time was in the Sloulin building.

The flood waters backed up the street as far as the Home Hotel, and every business place was flooded with the exception of Keach's Meat Market, the Ambrose Barber Shop and the Viola News. The merchants stuck by the job of raising their goods until they worked in water nearly waist deep. The electric light plant was put out of commission. Thirty inches of water stood on the creamery floor and the Kinder Hardware. One restaurant had three feet of water on the floor. The Shamrock building and the Clift Hardware, two places where the floods had never reached before, did not escape, for over seven inches of water stood on the floor of both buildings. Eight inches of water was in the Farmers Bank. Webb's store suffered heavy loss from damaged goods that were caught by the water before volunteer workmen could get them moved to safety. Many residents in the lower levels moved their furniture to second floors and vacated. H. O. Wheeler suffered a double loss as the flood waters damaged his home and his feed store, where nearly two feet of water on the floor soaked up grain and feed, causing a heavy loss. A car load of shell corn, just unloaded, came in for a total loss.

Many boxes of cheese at the Cold Storage were flooded. In fact, most every place of business suffered untold loss. The railroad was damaged thousands of dollars. The tracks were under water for miles and much of the grade and fill in the village was washed away. Several rods of the track bed, west of the depot, was washed out and the tracks and ties left suspended in the air.

The town was cut off from electric power and drinking water for over twenty-four hours.

What few boats we had in town were pressed into service for rescue purposes and then later, used for pleasure, as a lot of fun was had in boating on our main street. One boat load of venturesome young people rowed right into Hall's restaurant, stopped at the counter and ordered up refreshments. They were served, sitting in the boat, while they ate. They were later upset by the current out in the street and were dumped into the muddy flood water.

It is hard to estimate the damage to the farm lands and the crops and that suffered by our village, but it was many thousands of dollars. Daily reports of the flood reached to the outside world and newspapers sent airplanes in to take pictures and interview our people.

Telephone lines were damaged in the under ground cables and the town was without telephone service for several days.

It took weeks to put the town back in good order, as large holes were washed in the streets, which took many loads of dirt to fill and business places and homes had several inches of slimy mud to shovel out. The city water was boiled to safeguard the health of the citizens and every precaution was taken to prevent an epidemic from breaking out.

Sixteen years went by without a major flood, but on July 21, 1951, another record was broken. This time it was a flash flood following

a cloudburst, that seemed to be centered pretty much in this section, although the storm covered a wide area.

The flood caught most of the residents by surprise as it happened early in the morning. A wall of water descended on Viola with combined efforts from Goose Creek and Camp Creek, as well as from the north Kickapoo waters.

It all happened so fast, that one minute the streets were clear of water and in the next few minutes there was two feet of water rushing down Main Street. By the time people were made aware of the danger, the water was raising too fast to remove any belongings. The L. N. Kellogg family were sound asleep when the neighbors came to awake them and told them the water was in their home. Two cars owned by the family were caught in the flood and ruined. Approximately twenty-five cars in the village were marooned and damaged by the onslaught of the flood. Viola was virtually isolated that day. Farmers suffered untold damage, as many of their fields lost all the top soil and rocks were deposited on the land instead. Landslides from the hills blocked highways in many places. The highway east of town had washouts, several of the bridges on Highway 56, further up the creek, were washed out.

In the village, water was reported at eight inches in the Mobil Station at Denver Heal's. He was more fortunate than some of the others, because he had time to remove his equipment before the water reached him.

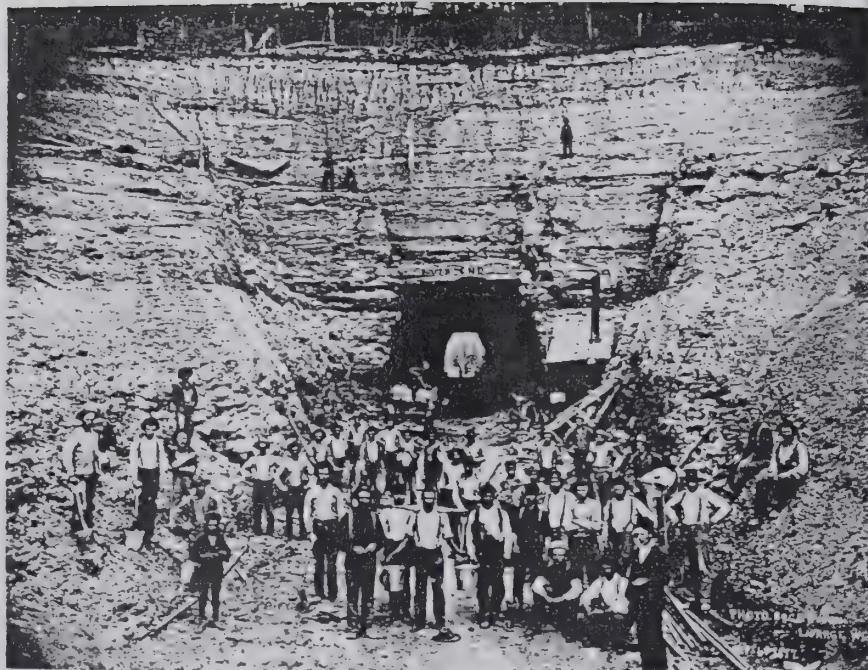
Eighteen inches of water stood on the floor of Gordon Wheeler's Drug Store. Here there was much damage as the furnace in the basement was completely covered. Water was back up the street as far as the Bakery. Hugh Raether reported a \$1,000.00 damage. The damage at the Melvin Appliance Store was estimated at \$7,500. Hall's Motor Sales suffered a loss of about \$12,000. as the water was three feet deep in his place of business. Four cars, one truck and a tractor was caught in the garage. All places of business suffered great losses as everywhere the flood entered the business places and damaged the stock of goods and fixtures.

The water ran through several homes in the lower part of the village. Marquardt, Kanable, Wheeler, Adams, Kellogg and Bunker suffered much damage to household goods. Water was very deep in the power plant and ruined the skating rink across the road from it. Water got in a wool storage shed of Fred Matthes and damaged much of the wool stored in the building. The Columbian Pin Co. buildings were completely surrounded. There was no way in actually estimating the damage to this area from the flood. It took many days to clean up the slime and mud in the buildings and on the streets, and to prevent an outbreak of typhoid, an immunization center was set up to safeguard the citizens.

At Soldiers Grove the disaster was worse than at Viola, and in spite of the cleaning up job that faced our residents, many went to help them and shared clothing and food for the people of their sister village.

Since this last flood, some precautions have been taken to safeguard against a recurrence of such a loss by flood. The cement dam has been removed, the river channel widened and deepened and so far, no flood water has been high enough to get out of control. The sloughs between the business district and the river are gradually being filled and a beautiful park is in the making, where formerly the flood water flowed at will. Instead of Viola's disasters getting them down, they are being used as stepping stones to greater achievement.

Although the big snow storm of May 28, 1947 did not cause a



**BUILDING OF THE TUNNEL**  
Built in 1896 and 1897

major flood, it was in itself an event long to be remembered. The wet snow began in the early afternoon of the 28th and by night fall, there was five or more inches of heavy snow covering the bushes and trees already in full leaf. The branches were weighted to the ground and by morning, large limbs littered the streets. The town looked like a baby cyclone had struck it. Snow was found on the north hill sides as late as Memorial Day.

#### **OUR KICKAPOO RAILROAD**

There are those living today, a half century later, who remember that great day in 1897 when Viola took its first steps as a progressing town, for prosperity really came in with that first railway service.

An account of that first run was published in the *Intelligencer* of September 3, 1897, as follows: "The first regular train into Viola last Monday morning put new life into the old settler and made the younger class more enterprising. A large number of people gathered at the depot to watch the train make its first appearance. Uncle Salma Rogers, who had been a resident of Viola for forty-three years and had waited these many years for this event, procured a large flag and he raised it at the east end of the platform. As the train rounded the curve, the Viola band struck up a popular strain which made all more enthusiastic. Supt. Thomson, as engineer, landed the train on time."

It took several years of talk and civic pressure to bring about

the events that led up to this epic day in our village, long months of waiting while the road bed was graded and the rails laid, then the building of the depot climaxed the preparations, and the great day drew near when the old iron horse would be coming around the bend.

The laying of the road bed in our village changed the appearance of the town, as much dirt was removed where the depot and stock yards stood. This was done by hand and several small horse scoops, and taken east of town to make the fill for the tracks across Hull's land.

It took a great deal of engineering in those days to build the tunnel between Viola and LaFarge. The work on the tunnel progressed from both sides of the hill at the same time and the survey was so correct, the workmen met in the center of the hill without a hitch. At the start of the building of the tunnel, two narrow tracks were laid up the side hill to the starting point and small dump trucks were loaded by hand. A heavy rope was snubed to the trunk of a tree to ease the string of loaded trucks down the grade and at the same time, a load of empties were being brought up. There was much danger to life and limb on this construction job, and two men lost their lives. They were buried in the little Lawton cemetery on the hill near by.

Finally the tunnel was completed, the tracks laid on both sides, and the train made its first trip through. In about a year after its completion, rocks started to drop and at times they were so large the train crew had to clear the track before they could pass through. A watchman was stationed at the south end to flag the train when necessary. Finally the Company lined the tunnel with cement in 1901 and there was no further trouble from falling rocks.

The first excursion over the new line was run a few days after the maiden trip when 146 people from Viola went to Boscobel to experience their first train ride on the Kickapoo. Others joined them along the line. It took just one hour and fifty minutes to make the run to Wauzeka. It was a day long to be remembered. Down through the years, many other excursions were run on this Kickapoo branch line, to fairs at Gays Mills and Boscobel, to circuses, to track meets at various places, and even a few base ball games. All that was required to get a train for a special occasion was a guarantee of the sale of so many tickets, and Viola being the pleasure seeking and sporting town she was, patronized the excursions frequently. But when the age of the automobile crept in, people used the train less for occasions of this kind.

It was the hub of industry for Viola for the entire age of the line, however, if records were available for the whole amount of produce that was shipped from our town alone, it would be a staggering amount. According to George Trezona, the depot agent at Viola, for the year of 1925, 524 full carloads of produce were handled at our station, 348 was outgoing and 176 incoming. The outgoing was 93 cars of cattle, 26 of hogs, 30 of sheep, 101 of hardwood lumber, 66 of cheese, 16 of tobacco and 16 miscellaneous. These were probably average figures for the forty-two years that we retained the railroad.

Many times in the fall of the year, special trains were operated on the branch line to accomodate the heavy runs of livestock that was accumulated from the farms and pasture lands in the surrounding hills. There were a few times when a "Special" was needed for Viola alone, when from 25 to 40 cars of livestock were loaded out from this station. The special train would come the evening before and loading would go on all night with the engine puffing and snorting, shoving the loaded cars around to make room for empties at the loading chutes. The next morning when the train would be made up, ready to leave town, the load would be so heavy, it was a big effort for the engine to get under



**RAILWAY DEPOT and METHODIST CHURCH**  
With Mt. Nebo in the distance.

motion. The black smoke would roll and with much noise, and bells ringing, the train would get under way and head for its ultimate destination, the livestock market in Chicago.

If you were to ask any number of our citizens, they would be able to tell of many such experiences and happy memories connected with our train. One is sure to recall the every day races of our two hotel proprietors, as they, with their two wheel luggage carts, raced up the street to the depot, as the first faint notes of the locomotive sounded in the distance. Before the passenger coach had hardly come to a stop, both men began calling out, "Right this way for the Commercial House", and "Come with me to the Home Hotel", the medley of their voices becoming confused in the noises of the screeching brakes, bells ringing and the slam bang of luggage and freight being unloaded. There was keen competition between the two to get the most traveling salesmen, which in those days was of great importance, because all merchandise was handled through the channel of these traveling men as many of them visited our town every week by way of the railroad.

Then, who doesn't remember about the times that practically the whole town, reinforced by the school band, would be waiting on the platform, for the evening train to pull in with the conquering and victorious Track Teams and other contest winners, to give them a royal welcome,

It is no small wonder that a dark shadow hovered over Viola and the whole Kickapoo Valley, when talk of the possibility that the railroad would be taken from our community. Viola and all the area around began making a special effort to forestall the blow. A Kickapoo Defense Association was formed to fight the abandoning case. Appropriations from the three County Boards, that were vitally interested in the outcome, were given to help pay the expenses of lawyers, who were hired to fight the case. This began in 1937. For one year the fight went on, and finally the railroad conceded a trial period, giving the towns a chance to increase the revenue to make it worth while for the Company

to continue their line. But to no avail, for the order finally came to abandon the line, and so, after forty-two years, lacking fifteen days, after the Kickapoo Valley branch of the Chicago, Milwaukee and St. Paul railroad first puffed its way into Viola the old iron horse made its last run.

Despite his 74 years, Matt Holman, engineer for the first run on the Kickapoo branch in 1892, came out of a two year retirement to pilot the last train. No formal ceremonies accompanied the death of the branch on August 15, 1939, but all the previous week, the younger generation were taking their last ride, to some, it was their first, as most trips by them were being taken by automobile. It was the advent of the cars and trucks that no doubt sounded the death knell of our "Old Faithful", the Stump Dodger, as it was familiarly called by all our citizens, both young and old.

#### IN CONCLUSION

More than one hundred years ago, Mt. Nebo in her majestic beauty, stood patiently waiting the coming, over hill and dale, of those rugged pioneers, who settled in our Kickapoo Valley. Since that time many panoramic scenes have passed in silent review at her feet. New faces have taken the place of old, modern conveniences have replaced the crude implements of those a century ago.

Many moons have come and gone, yet Mt. Nebo remains the same, the ravages of time holds no threat to her majesty. She will be here to ever watch over the new generations, yea, centuries to come. The scenes that will unfold, only time will reveal.

Now at the close of this eventful century as we are about to celebrate, in pageantry, the memorial deeds of our forefathers and because we owe so much to those brave pioneers who came to our valley and laid the ground work for our present day achievements, we wish to dedicate the recordings of the past "One Hundred Years of Progress" to their memory.

The heritage they left us in their untiring efforts in the face of great obstacles is worthy of our recognition, and we need to pause and review the past in proper perspective to fully appreciate the ground work laid by those who came and conquered, down through the past century. If they could speak for themselves, I am sure their admonition would be, "To take what you have and do your best."

It is the youth of today, on whose shoulders rest the responsibility of the future, to carry on the unfinished work of those who have gone on before. And of those of us of this present generation, a score or more years from now, will it be rightly said that we have "Builded Better Than We Knew", and have left behind us, "Foot Prints on the Sands of Time"?

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